Application for funding for health-related pilot projects
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Title: End of life care in American history

1-2 paragraph summary:

End of life care for elderly individuals has changed dramatically within the US over time. The colonial era was largely characterized by family- or community-provided support for the elderly towards the end of their life, whereas the early-to-mid 19th century saw the impoverished elderly shift into lower quality care as provided by poorhouses. A variety of local, state, and federal policies in the 20th century – ranging from Old Age Assistance and Social Security to Medicare and Medicaid – coincided with dramatic changes in end of life care for the elderly, including a general shift of end of life care for both well-off and impoverished elderly into nursing homes. Today, 70% of individuals living to age 65 are projected to use long-term care services at some point, and end of life and long-term care expenditures comprise a substantial share of state and federal budgets.

The goals of this pilot project would be as follows. First, we aim to construct new historical data series to quantify changes over time in end of life care for the elderly in the US. Second, our hope is that these new descriptive data series will inform and guide our decisions about where best to focus our attention in terms of understanding the drivers of these changes in end of life care, both on the demand side (e.g. changes in labor market opportunities for children of the elderly, which may have affected their willingness to provide in-kind care) and on the supply side (e.g. policies changing the costs of or incentives for facilities such as nursing homes to enter various markets). Our preliminary work investigating the survey questions available in historical US Census data as well as various other surveys and datasets (e.g. Bureau of Labor Statistics survey data tabulated in historical issues of the *Monthly Labor Review*) have given us reason for optimism that these efforts would develop into a more concrete set of projects that could form the basis for an NIA grant proposal. The pilot project funding would be used to support research assistant work on the time-consuming tasks of compiling these types of historical data sources.