

# *Global Health Equity: The Time is Now*

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# *Conflict of Interest*

Walter G. Suarez, MD, MPH

Has no real or apparent conflicts of interest to report.

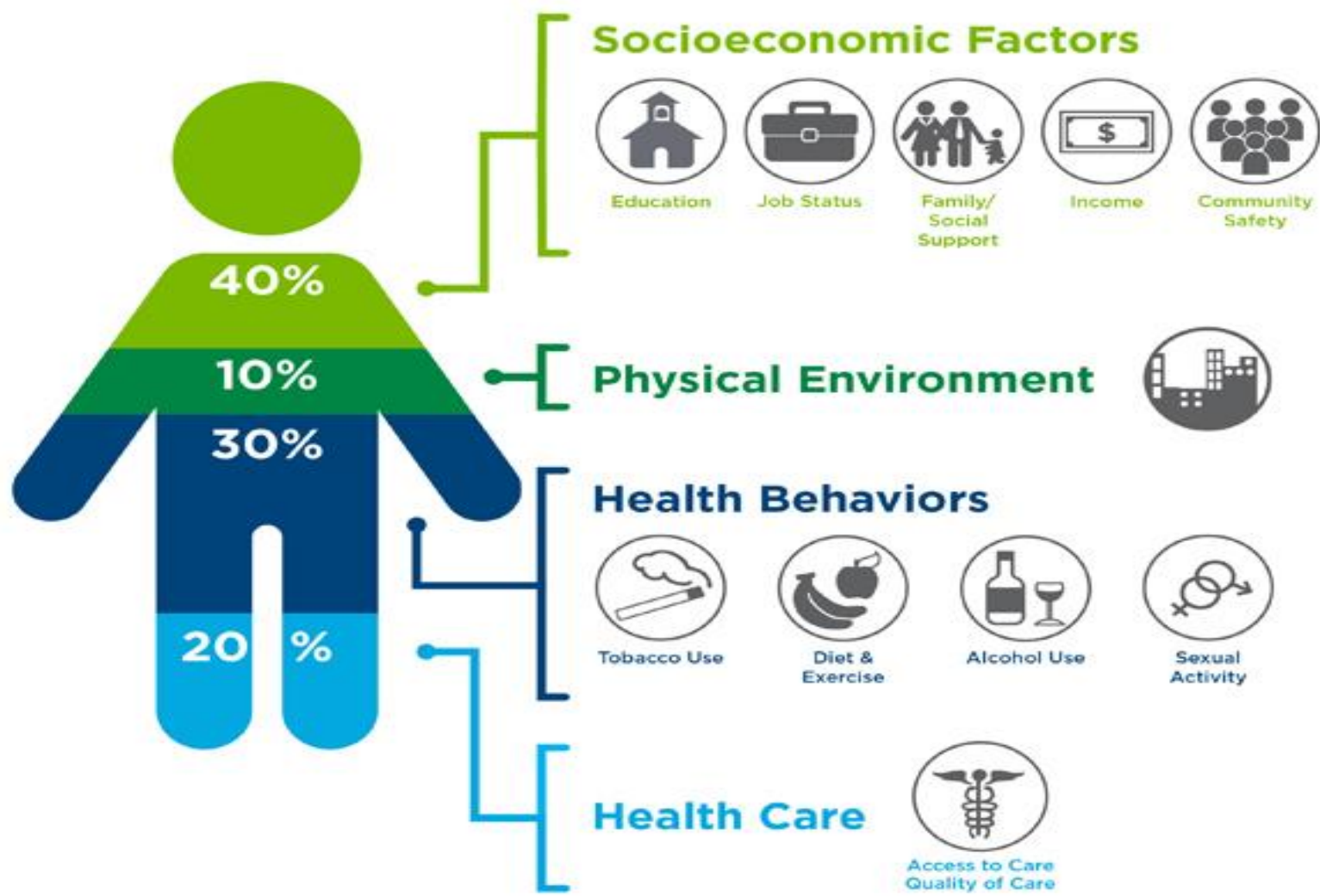
# *Learning Objectives*

- Describe what health equity looks like in a perfect world
- Identify barriers to achieving health equity
- Discuss how to impact change in your organization or community

# *Agenda*

- Health Equity – A Long Road from the Past
- Key Definitions
- What Causes Health Inequities and Disparities
- A Proposal for a Health Equity Framework: Global, Regional, National, Organizational Strategies

# What Goes Into Your Health?



## SDOH Impact

- ➔ **20 percent** of a person's health and well-being is related to **access to care** and **quality of services**
- ➔ The **physical environment**, **social determinants** and **behavioral factors** drive **80 percent** of health outcomes

# *Health Equity: A Long Road from the Past*

- Inequities and disparities have existed for a long time in Society, in the Economy, and in Health and Health Care
- Exists around the World
- Inequities and disparities in health and health care are large, pervasive, and costly
- It has multiple dimensions (Race/Ethnicity, Urban/Rural, Age, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Income, Education, other)
- It is not just about Health or health care – it is also about Well Being
- It is not just about an Individual – it is also about the Community in which a person lives, works, studies, plays
- It is about Access to Affordable Quality Health Care and Social Health Services

A person zip-code is still a dominant indicator of the person's health, well-being and life expectancy

# Defining Health Equity

- ***Health Equity is a fundamental component of social justice that indicates the absence of avoidable, unfair or remediable differences among groups of people due to their social, economic, demographic or geographic circumstances.***
- ***Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible.***
- ***This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.***
- ***For the purposes of measurement, health equity means reducing and ultimately eliminating disparities in health and its determinants that adversely affect excluded/marginalized groups.***

PAHO, 2021

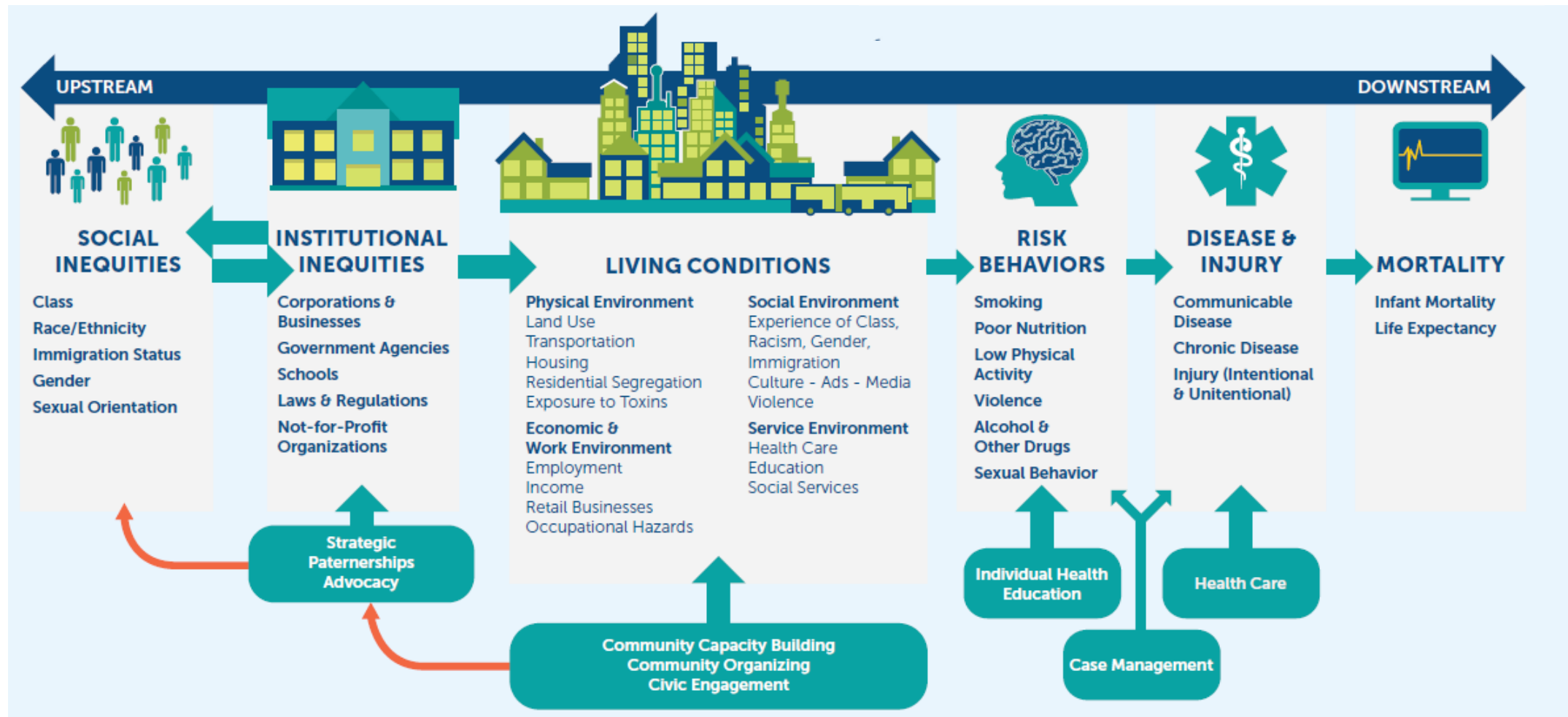
Braveman P, Arkin E, Orleans T, Proctor D, and Plough A. *What Is Health Equity? And What Difference Does a Definition Make?* Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2017.

# *Health Equity and Health Disparities*

- Closely related terms
- Health Equity: Ethical and human rights principle that motivates the elimination of health disparities
- Health Disparities: Differences in health, health care, or social determinants of health that adversely affect specific population groups
- Measuring disparities in health, health care, and SDOH is how we measure progress towards health equity
- Health Equity can be viewed as both a PROCESS (reducing disparities in health, health care, SDOHs) as well as OUTCOME (the ultimate goal of eliminating disparities)



# Inequities lead to Disparities



## *Importance of SDOH*

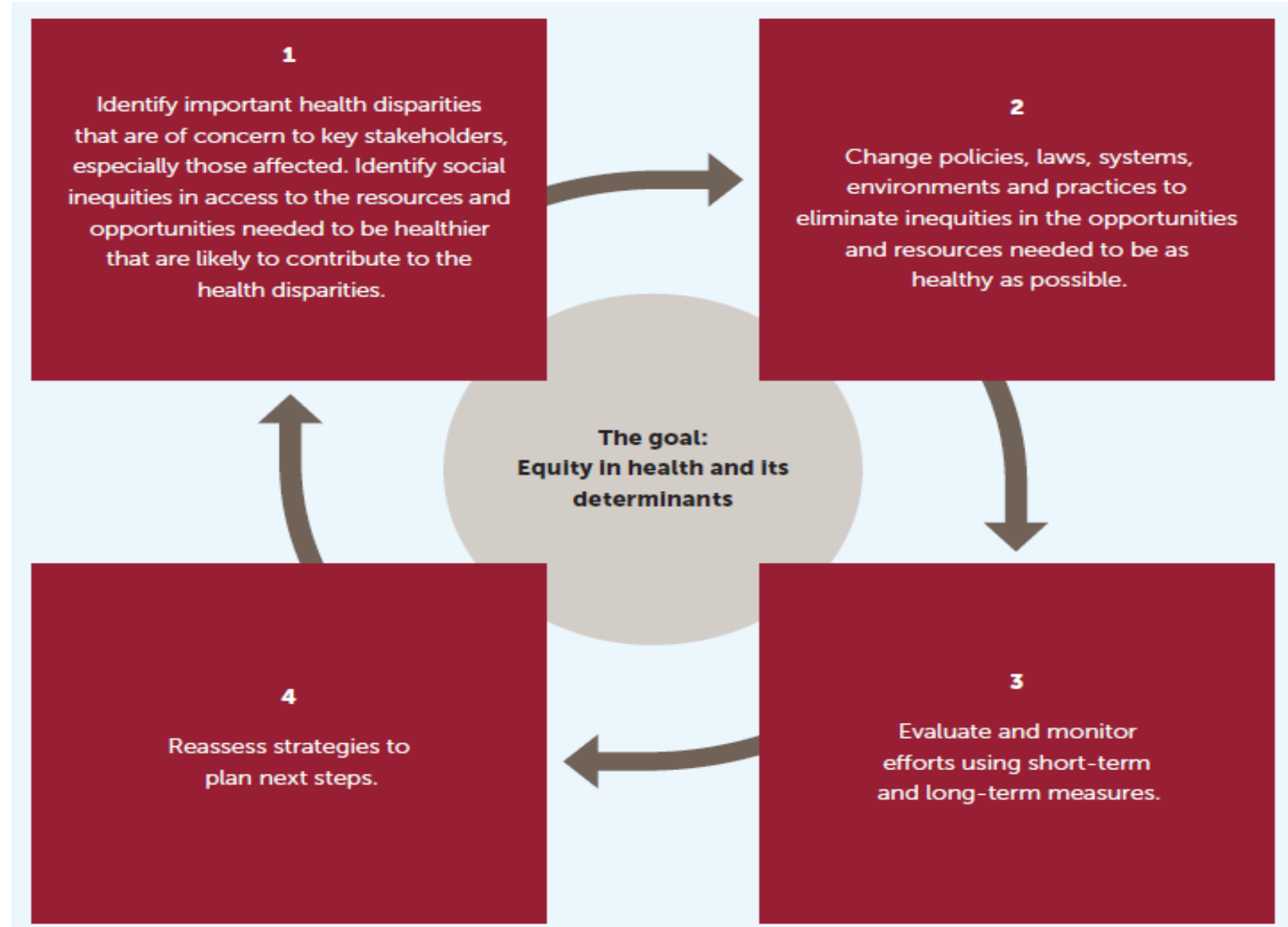
- There is growing awareness that SDOH information improves whole person care and lowers cost. Unmet social needs negatively impact health outcomes
- **Food insecurity** – correlates to higher levels of diabetes, hypertension, and heart failure.
- **Housing instability** – factors into lower treatment adherence by patients.
- **Transportation barriers** – result in missed appointments, delayed care, and lower medication compliance
- Addressing SDOH is a primary approach to achieve health equity

# *Challenges in SDOH Data Capture/Exchange*

- Consent Management
- Standardization of SDOH Data Collection and Storage
- Data Sharing Between Ecosystem Parties
- Access & Comfort with Digital Solutions
- Concerns about Information Collection and Sharing
- Social Care Sector Capacity and Capability
- Unnecessary Medicalization of SDOH

[https://www.nasdoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NASDOH-Data-Interoperability\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nasdoh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NASDOH-Data-Interoperability_FINAL.pdf)

# Key Steps to Advancing Health Equity



# *Principles to Guide Action to Achieve Health Equity*

- Societal action needed to remove obstacles, increase opportunities to health, health care and well being
- Policy, systems, and environmental improvements have great potential to prevent and reduce health inequities
- Opportunities to be healthy depend on the living and working conditions and other resources that enable people to be as healthy as possible.
- Pursuing health equity entails striving to improve everyone's health while focusing particularly on those with worse health and fewer resources to improve their health.

# *Principles to Guide Action to Achieve Health Equity*

- Approaches to achieving health equity should build on and optimize the existing strengths and assets of excluded or marginalized groups.
- Piecemeal approaches targeting one factor at a time are rarely successful in a sustained way.
- Achieving health equity requires identifying and addressing not only overt discrimination but also unconscious and implicit bias and their discriminatory effects
- Measurement is crucial to document inequities and disparities
- The pursuit of equity is never finished. It requires constant, systematic, and devoted effort.

# ***Towards a Global Framework for Health Equity***

- **Overarching Components**
  - **Dismantle structural racism and other discriminatory practices and policies**
  - **Establish policies to remove financial barriers to health care**
  - **Establish policies that address Social Determinants of Health**
  - **Establish a model to document and monitor health equity interventions to identify what works, what doesn't**

# ***Towards a Global Framework for Health Equity***

- WHO, International Bodies (OECD, EU, others)
  - Develop Guidance to Achieving Health Equity at Country Level
  - Establish a Global Observatory on Health Equity



# ***Towards a Global Framework for Health Equity***

- **Countries**
  - **Develop a national plan to address health inequities and disparities**
  - **Establish a national executive with authority and resources to execute plan**
  - **Establish an “Observatory” on Health Equity to gather data and monitor progress**
  - **Implement policies to require public programs to address health equity**

# ***Towards a Global Framework for Health Equity***

- Health Care Organizations
  - Establish a Chief Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer
  - Develop a Corporate strategy to address health inequities and disparities
  - Create a Culture of Health Equity, Address Structural Racism and Discriminatory Practices
  - Execute, Measure, Monitor

# Questions

THANK YOU!

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