

MAKING THE DIFFERENCE: TAKING STOCK OF THE AGING POLICY LANDSCAPE

JANUARY 2025 TAKEAWAYS

The 2025 Making the Difference conference focused on taking stock of the new public policy landscape in the wake of the 2024 elections, and what it may mean for the programs, services and protections that older adults in Alameda County rely on.

PLENARY

Keynote speaker Kevin Prindiville with Justice in Aging laid out a picture of the federal policy landscape and a framework for navigating the onslaught of threats to public benefits that help older adults make ends meet and receive the health care, food and community supports they need to be stable and live in their communities

Alameda County Supervisor Elisa Márquez shared how she is preparing for the changing policy environment, the importance of meeting the moment, and her commitment to maintaining an open door for community input to understand and address emerging issues.

A panel of local nonprofit, city and county leaders shared how they are preparing their organizations to address anticipated policy and budget changes. They elevated their concerns for the programs and populations that are most at risk, and shared their priorities for the year and what stakeholders can do to align and support those goals.

A panel of community members shared their personal stories of how they came to be policy advocates, what they learned, and how they show up, support each other, and take action.

DISCUSSION CAFÉ

The conference is a rare opportunity when people from the many sectors and systems that touch older adults were in one place at the same time. We took advantage of that diversity of perspectives and expertise to engage attendees in multi-disciplinary small-group conversations that elevated priorities, opportunities for action, and the personal commitments that will help us move forward.

Following are some of the themes that emerged from our Discussion Café, and a sampling of the recommendations (some have been combined):

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**Opportunities to stay informed, and to connect support and join campaigns:**

- Sign up for Justice In Aging's email alerts.
- Join Fight For Our Health list/coalition through Health Access.
- Sign up for CANHR's Leg Alerts.
- Look for existing opportunities to connect, such as the Senior Nutrition Advocacy Committee (SNAC) run by United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County; and Senior Advocates for Hope & Justice.
- Use the Just Security tracker to follow legal challenges to executive orders.
- Write Support Letters or do a "Me Too" at the capital for CANHR's legislation.
- Please watch this documentary film concerning elder abuse in the Probate and Family Court System in Nevada: "The Guardians" by Billie Mintz, Producer.
- Join the California Association of Adult Day Services in advocating for increased Medi-Cal reimbursement rates so that Adult Day Health Care Centers are sustainable.
- Join CA Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA).

Step up and make time for civic engagement and policy advocacy.

- Attend State Legislative Hearings and write letters to support legislation and funding.
- Subscribe to your Elected Officials' email lists (congressional representatives and senators, county supervisors, etc.)
- Contact Federal and State Representatives to not cut Medicaid/Medicare Benefits and Older Americans Act.
- Attend local, state and federal government meetings regularly and ask "how does this item impact older adults and their families?"
- Put Pressure on Moderate Republicans in CA to oppose Federal Cuts to Medicaid and others
- Train and Mobilize Seniors & People with Disabilities to participate in advocacy actions, tell their Stories & attend Government Meetings, and work w/CBOs to align messaging.

Work locally to assist people who are targeted, marginalized or impacted.

- Help Individuals access/navigate services including CalAIM, AAA, ILC Programs
- Promote Aging Career Pathways – Education & Awareness among Youth
- Build Awareness/Promote legal rights and other resources to Protect Immigrants
- Connect people to the Alameda County Immigration Legal Education Partnership.
- Train Health Care Providers, Senior Service Providers, Everyone on Rights for Immigrants & distribute KNOW YOUR RIGHTS Info Cards
- Establish/Promote Aging Navigator Programs in Health Plans.

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Design your programs, organizations and spaces to support, ally, and protect.

- Create Healing Spaces where people can avoid triggers and can breath
- Make sure lived experience is valued in program design! Specifically make sure we are engaged and used for defining Actual Support needed.
- Diversify Funding for Services (at the city and county level and in organizations)
- Create a business co-op that employs older adults to meet service gaps and satisfy Medicaid work requirements.
- Reduce or exempt property taxes for Vets and fixed income seniors.
- Establish and promote aging navigator programs in health plans / county agencies.
- Use Technology to Support Connections to Care + Reach Individuals in their Homes
- Advocate for a Dementia-Friendly Alameda County

PRIORITIES - PRIZES TO KEEP OUR EYES ON**Oppose cuts to federal programs that older adults / people with disabilities need.**

- Protect Medicaid from cuts by opposing block grants, per capita caps, federal match reductions, provider tax restrictions, and work requirements.
- Protect / preserve Medicare, Social Security and SSDI, Supplemental Security Income, SNAP (CalFresh in CA), and Older Americans Act programs / funding
- Protect and preserve Medicaid waiver programs like MSSP, ALW, HCBA, etc.

Advance policy change initiatives that are queued up and ready to go.

- Pass renewed state funding for APS Home Safe (Senior Services Coalition)
- Pass Legislation for Rent Protections for People using Assisted Living Waivers (ALWs) in RCFES, to Strengthen Eviction Protections at RCFES & to Prevent Hospital Dumping ([CANHR](#))
- Adult Day Health Care Medi-Cal rate increase ([CAADS](#))
- Pass Legislation to Strengthen Home & Community Based Alternatives Waiver (CSH)
- Fund No Wrong Door/Aging & Disability Resource Centers (C4A)
- Create more IHSS career pathways and service options via IHSS Contract Mode.

Adapt by building the community we want and need.

- Expand the Aging Services workforce with Incentives for People to Work in Social Work/Aging/Gerontology (Loan Forgiveness, Paid Internships etc.), and by partnering across sectors to skill build, develop experience, certify and encourage
- Ensure that CA continues on CalAIM & Other Medical Programs even if Federal Cuts
- Protect/Expand Home and Community Based Services
- Home Modification Program Awareness building and Funding Protection
- State Legislation for IHSS Phone Reassessments
- Living Wages for Work Force in Providing Care Services
- Protect Immigrant Sanctuary Cities

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Adapt by building the community we want and need. (continued)

- Increase the Uptake of CalAIM ECM + CS to Support Older Adults Living in A.C.
- Open/Reopen Adult Day Centers
- People First – Human Dignity

PERSONAL COMMITMENTS**Learning and Skill-building**

- Lookup Fight for Our Health at Health Access CA
- Request the A.C. Senior Resources List by calling the AAA at 1-800-510-2020
- I will find a mentor
- Work on my confidence in my role as a policy advocate
- Be Clearer and Communicate how People will be Impacted
- You Can't Choose Your Future, Only your Habits – Plan for Challenges

Practice Balance

- I will limit my social media time
- Make Personal Strategic Plan (what do I need to do to not burnout)
- Take Time to Go to Movies
- Improve my sleep habits.
- Spend time every day Journaling, Reading, Breathing to take care of Myself / Stay Calm
- Contribute + Advocate where I can – this is a marathon, not a sprint

Join, Engage, Advocate

- Continue Connections Made Today
- Contact my Legislators
- Be Brave! (Not Racist)
- I will continue to serve in my capacity as interim chair of the Public Authority for IHSS Advisory Committee, and I will work to recruit new members and groom them to take over as leaders in the IHSS Advocacy world, especially in Alameda County.
- Commit to Staying Educated to Provide Effective Advocacy
- Learn more about Community Partners so we can Connect More
- Talk to St Mary's Advocates about How to Strengthen Senior and Disability Advocacy
- Promote Older Adult Resources (Ex. Hard Copy Senior Resources)
- I will continue to write to the Chief Justice and other individuals in power