

# 10/2023

REPORT OUT

Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

## LIVING ON THE EDGE – ECONOMIC, HOUSING AND FOOD INSECURITY AMONG OLDER ADULTS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

### S U M M A R Y

On October 26, 2023, Senior Services Coalition convened a virtual forum focused on real world challenges. We heard from organizations working in their communities to address the unique needs of older adults. We learned about the challenges they are encountering regarding economic, food and housing insecurity. We discussed the multiple factors that are destabilizing an increasing number of older adults and leading to displacement and poor health outcomes, and elevated practical policy solutions that we can act on. **The following pages cover reports from the field and responsive policy solutions.**



*“Assemblymember Wicks truly understands the challenges facing older adults and the organizations that serve them. We appreciate her willingness to partner with us to move policy solutions forward in 2024.”*

- Charlie Deterline, 2023 SSC  
Chan/Randolph Policy Fellow and Executive  
Director of SOS Meals on Wheels

**Thank you to our Legislative Partner.** We want to express our resounding thanks to Assemblymember Buffy Wicks for joining us and engaging in such a thoughtful discussion.

The Assemblymember’s remarks spoke to her understanding of, and deep commitment to, addressing the core issues facing our most vulnerable neighbors, including seniors. She highlighted housing, family leave and caregiving, and transportation as priorities that represent significant issues for older adults in District 14 and throughout the state, referencing some of her own past work and recent legislative efforts. The Assemblymember spoke of the inequities facing many older adults, especially women and women of color. She noted that transportation is so vital to older adults that it must be part of planning, policy and funding discussions going forward, whether the focus is on housing, healthcare, food security, or access to needed services and enriching activities.

Assemblymember Wicks' familiarity with the services and service providers working on behalf of older Californians and older Alameda County residents helped the conversation flow naturally into a discussion about concrete solutions that can address gaps, remove unnecessary complexity, improve access, and lead to tangible improvements for older adults and caretakers.

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## CRITICAL NEXT STEPS

### Policy Solutions for Addressing Factors that are Increasingly Destabilizing Older People

Our discussion with Assemblymember Wicks and community-based organizations identified critical trends and elevated multiple policy solutions to address them, including the following:

- **Advance state and local homelessness prevention solutions that provide both shallow and deep subsidies** so that older adults on low and fixed incomes can remain housed.<sup>1</sup>
- **Make APS HomeSafe an ongoing program.** This critically necessary program deploys case management and services to prevent homelessness and support stability for Adult Protective Services clients. The program was expanded statewide in 2021 with \$92.5 million in annual funding through FY 2022/23.
- **Champion innovative housing options that are both sustainable and incorporate aging-in-place.** Models such as intergenerational co-housing and shared housing, as well as best-practices in permanent supportive housing, create community and a sense of belonging that has positive impacts on health and well-being.
- **Make the Medi-Cal Assisted Living Waiver available to more people** by introducing and passing legislation and budget proposals that will expand the number of slots from approximately 6,000 statewide to over 18,000.
- **Support the expansion of the Independent Living Association,** which supports board-and-care providers with skill-building, best practices and links to supportive services that can address residents' needs.<sup>2</sup>
- **Support reforms of the Social Services Transportation Improvement Act to address the growing population of older adults** that is increasing demand for accessible and practical transportation solutions.
- **Advance reforms that level the playing field for nonprofits** serving marginalized populations, including streamlining administrative processes, and extending the Prompt Payment Act to community-based organizations and nonprofits.
- **Support 2024 ballot measures, ACA 1 and the Bay Area Regional Housing Bond** to change voter threshold from two-thirds to 55% to approve general obligation bonds for affordable housing, and raise \$10-20 billion to build thousands of affordable homes.

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## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

The October 26 panel brought to our attention trends that are threatening the stability and security of older adults. We want to thank Eleanor Lee with the Felton Institute; Lara Calvert with Spectrum Community Services; Donna Griggs-Murphy, a Commissioner with the Alameda County Commission on Aging; and Charlie Deterline with SOS Meals on Wheels.

The issues they highlighted include:

**During the pandemic, providers of meals, food and other supportive services stepped up to serve significantly more clients – in most cases the demand has not decreased.**

**Older adults who are struggling because of cognitive or functional limitations and economic insecurity need case management support, but inadequate service capacity means that many go without the help that could prevent repeat 911 calls, hospitalizations, and housing loss.**

*19% of unhoused people are age 60 or older, an increase from 14% in 2019 and 10% in 2017.*

- Alameda County 2022 Point in Time



**Demand for low-income senior housing far exceeds supply; waitlists are 2-4 years long. Senior housing affordability models vary – some accommodate very low/fixed incomes, but others set rents based on area average, making them unaffordable for many seniors. Likewise, the supply of affordable and deeply affordable housing is inadequate.**

**Older adults deserve options that allow them to age in place.**

**Board-and-care facilities can offer more affordable, home-like supportive housing options for older adults with cognitive or physical challenges, but most are unlicensed and unregulated, leaving residents vulnerable to situations that compromise their health or safety.**

**The number of slots in the state's Assisted Living Waiver have not been increased for several years, making this solution unavailable to people with the highest need and least ability to wait.**

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## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Transportation options for older adults and people with disabilities have limitations that make them impractical for people who need to travel across several jurisdictions, visit a doctor who may be running late, need same day or door-through-door service, live too close to a bus line or can't afford even minimal cost.

Gero-expert community-based organizations know how to help people remain stable as they age, but they are hampered by funding levels that have not kept pace with inflation, as well as wage increases or increasingly complex administration and reporting requirements.

*“For everyone, interventions to address health and the social determinants of health have the best outcomes when a person has stable housing. For older adults, this is critical. Housing instability, displacement and homelessness have serious negative impacts on health”*

- Wendy Peterson, Director of Senior Services Coalition



*The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County (SSC) represents nonprofit and public organizations who are working together to ensure that Alameda County seniors can rely on an easily accessible, coordinated system of social, medical and supportive services. SSC has been a unifying and collaborative force in Alameda County for over 20 years, bringing the aging voice to policy making and building service and system capacity to address the needs of a diverse, aging and economically insecure population.*

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### References

1. [AB 2547](#) (Nazarian, 2022) was one such proposal for housing stabilization subsidies that would enable an estimated 25,000 older and disabled Californians annually to access or keep their housing.
2. The [ILA](#) ceased operating in Alameda County in 2022 due to lack of a dedicated funding source, but continues to operate in San Diego County.