

Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

September 7, 2022

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Request for Signature on AB 2483 (Maienschein)

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am writing on behalf of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County and our 43 member organizations to express our support for AB 2483 (Maienschein), which will use existing resources to foster the creation of supportive housing for older adults and people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness and facing institutionalization.

Our coalition members – community-based organizations that collectively provide social and health services to over 80,000 older people in Alameda County – are encountering increasing numbers of older adults who are experiencing homelessness for the first time in their lives. Whether prompted by economic hardship, health or family crisis, homelessness has serious negative health impacts on older people.

The research backs up what we are seeing in our communities – that Californians over 50 years old are the fastest-growing homeless population. People experiencing homelessness require, on average, 60 more days of nursing home care than those who are housed. This increased risk of nursing home placement and prolonged stay, coupled with significantly higher rates of hospitalization admissions and longer hospital days, results in disproportionately higher costs for older adults and people with disabilities. These costs are born by the state, health care systems, and individuals. Studies show housing with services promoting independence avoid health costs of nursing home admissions and acute care settings.

Additionally, over 9% of California nursing home residents (an estimated 37,000) have low-level care needs and could potentially live in the community. Many of these individuals, however, have lost their homes and would be discharged into homelessness, and so remain unnecessarily institutionalized. Given the costs to Medi-Cal of skilled nursing care is over \$120,000 annually, the State has strong financial interests in preventing people who have experienced homelessness from nursing home stays, as well as in helping people access independent places to live.

Medi-Cal currently offers programs that allow people who face the risk of institutionalization to live independently. These Medi-Cal programs include the Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), the Assisted Living Waiver (ALW), and the Home and Community-Based Alternatives Waiver (HCBAW), all of which are intended to fund intensive services that help people who would otherwise be institutionalized to live independently. The Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) administers capital funding through California's

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Multifamily Housing Program (MHP) to aid developers in creating supportive housing, housing with services that allow people to exit homelessness. Yet, barriers exist to using Medi-Cal programs to provide services in HCD-funded supportive housing. PACE, ALW, and HCBAW providers often do not have relationships with developers creating independent housing, and housing and Medi-Cal programs are siloed, which puts the burden on people experiencing homelessness to navigate these programs separately.

AB 2483 (Maienschein) will resolve these barriers. Under the bill, HCD will offer incentives to developers seeking funding through the Multifamily Housing Program to build projects that include housing for people experiencing homelessness eligible for PACE, ALW, or HCBAW. By aligning eligibility and offering incentives to developers, the bill promotes partnerships between developers and Medi-Cal providers. The bill also makes minor clarifications to State law, stating that housing created under the bill would not require licensing. By aligning eligibility between these Medi-Cal programs and California's Multifamily Housing Program, the bill will scale up best practices that allow older adults and people with disabilities experiencing homelessness to avoid nursing home admissions.

Using existing resources, and with DHCS and DSS identifying absorbable costs, AB 2483 will reduce State costs of institutionalization, allowing people to live in housing in their community of choice, scaling up best practices in funding housing and services, and providing public-facing accountability for equitable outcomes.

For these reasons, we urge your signature on this important bill as consistent with your goals of solving homelessness and coordinating State agency response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Peterson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "W" and "P".

Wendy Peterson

Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County