

# Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

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June 24, 2024

Supervisor Keith Carson, Chair, Budget Committee  
Alameda County Board of Supervisors  
1221 Oak Street, 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Re: REVISED Request for Emergency Stabilization Funding for Aging Services

Dear Supervisor Carson,

The 35 community-based organizations that contract through the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) are suddenly confronted with a crisis that will harm thousands of older adults and threatens to irrevocably damage the network of community-based health and supportive services that older adults rely on.

The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County respectfully requests \$2.17 million in one-time emergency stabilization funding in the County's 24/25 fiscal year budget to backfill imminent reductions, to be deployed as rapidly as possible to prevent staff layoffs and loss of continuity of care for vulnerable clients. In addition, we request that the Board initiate a system reform effort that will work collaboratively with community-based organizations to develop best practices that will lead to a transparent, proactive and accountable process that will center the safety and well-being of low-income older adults.

Here are the facts:

- CBOs are about to enter the second year of their 3-year contracts to provide Older Americans Act, Older Californians Act, and Measure A services.
- With less than two weeks to the beginning of the new fiscal year, the majority of CBOs still have not been formally notified by AAA of their allocations for FY 24/25.
- The final FY 24/25 contract allocation list for AAA contracted CBOs that SSA Finance Department shared with Senior Services Coalition on June 19, 2024 contains large reductions to programs provided by 30 of the contracting organizations. The reductions represent cuts of between 40% and 60% from the current year allocations – so deep that CBOs will be forced to lay off staff and limit or stop providing services as of July 1.
- The programs slated for cuts include those serving vulnerable, often medically fragile older adults for whom continuity of care is critical, and no time is left to identify and implement safe care transitions.
- The cuts span almost every program – home-delivered meals, case management, senior center activities, visiting and telephone reassurance, family caregiver support, information and assistance, and adult day care.
- SSA Finance Department staff have confirmed that 24/25 funding allocations have been reduced by approximately \$2.17 million.
- The sources of the cuts appear to be threefold: 1) ARPA dollars allocated for 23/24 are not available in 24/25; 2) the AAA did not include in the allocations about \$1 million in County General Funds that is available for 24/25; and 3) the AAA did not use the allowed flexibility to

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transfer up to 40% between congregate/C1 and home-delivered/C2 as has been done every year for over a decade.

CBOs received simplified, 3-year contracts at the beginning of the 23/24 fiscal year, which provided little to no insight into the funding sources that make up their allocations. CBOs have not received information on the sources of their allocations in spite of repeated requests to AAA staff. Nor have CBOs received advance notification about a change in funding levels for 24/25 – notice that would have allowed them to plan for reductions or request modified allocation or service levels. The lack of transparency, specificity and concrete documentation or instructions have left CBOs in the dark and unprepared for the cuts suddenly confronting them.

CBOs are still scrambling to calculate the impact that these reductions would have to their organizations and clients. What we know to date provides a snapshot of the impact on the community of service providers and the older adults they serve:

- The cuts will force staff reductions at Afghan Elderly Association, resulting in significant loss of services to the 400 Afghan seniors who rely on culturally and language appropriate information & assistance, injury prevention, telephone reassurance and visiting programs. (District 2)
- At ASEB the cuts will reduce the number of older adults with Alzheimer's and related dementias who will receive Adult Day Care services, and the number of families with loved ones with Alzheimer's who will receive support. (Districts 4 & 5)
- The cuts to CityServe of the Tri-Valley are expected to result in reduced services and support for senior needing case management, visiting and caregiver support. (District 1)
- At DayBreak, cuts will force reductions of case management staff that will mean turning away 40 elders who need intervention to navigate crises and regain stability. (Districts 2, 3, 4 & 5)
- Cuts will also result in a 40% reduction in DayBreak's support services for family caregivers. The resulting staff turnover will further compromise the organization's ability to serve clients in need. (Districts 2, 3, 4 & 5)
- At a Family Bridges, the cuts represent a 58% reduction in funding and will mean 1,740 monolingual, low-income Asian seniors will not have access to Information and Assistance services. (Districts 3, 4 & 5)
- Also at Family Bridges, cuts will mean that 232 monolingual, low-income Asian seniors will not have access to Senior Center Activities. That reflects more than 1,212 hours less activities hours provided to seniors. (Districts 3, 4 & 5)
- Also at Family Bridges, cuts will mean 50 socially-isolated, monolingual, low-income Asian seniors will not receive Friendly Visiting services. This reflects 1,450 hours less visiting hours. (Districts 3, 4 & 5)
- At City of Fremont the cuts represent almost 50% of the funding and will result in a severe reduction in services to the low-income, often vulnerable older adults with complex health needs who rely on case management, senior center services, information & assistance, and family caregiver support. (District 2)

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- At SOS the cuts will force staffing and service reductions that will result in 178 home-bound older adults losing their meals-on-wheels service and being put on a wait list, and the organization will not have capacity to serve new clients or respond to the needs of increasing numbers of food insecure, homebound seniors. (Districts 2,3,4,5)
- At J-Sei the cuts will require a 47% reduction in the number of seniors receiving linguistically appropriate case management, putting them at higher risk of poor health, isolation and increased medical needs due to lack of prevention and care coordination. (District 5)
- Also at J-Sei, the cuts will require a 60% reduction in the number of health focused classes, workshops and special events, depriving 608 seniors of regular health and social connection. (District 5)
- At VACCEB the cuts will eliminate multi-lingual services for hundreds of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Spanish-speaking monolingual clients, compromising their ability to access and maintain public benefits and healthcare coverage. (Districts 2, 3 and 4)

Without intervention, the county will lose service capacity that will be costly to replace. The services provided by CBOs are a necessary part of the equation in helping older adults live stably in the community. They complement medical care, decrease 911 calls, help seniors maintain health and economic stability, provide life-line interventions and prevent displacement, institutionalization and homelessness. These programs are the community-based supportive services that APS and other county programs, health plans and hospitals coordinate with and refer seniors to.

With the population of low-income older adults in our county growing rapidly, we cannot afford to lose program capacity or destabilize community-based organizations.

We know that the Board of Supervisors recognizes that the County has a stake in keeping our growing population of low-income seniors stable and safe. On behalf of all members of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County, I urge the Board of Supervisors to support this request.

Sincerely,



Wendy Peterson

Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County