

# Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

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February 4, 2019

Governor Gavin Newsom  
c/o State Capitol, Suite 1173  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

Thank you for the bold changes that you put forward in your inaugural budget. Your proposals – to significantly expand supports of low- and middle-income Californians are commendable.

As a coalition of 40 nonprofit and public organizations that provide community-based supportive services to over 65,000 older people in Alameda County, it is incumbent on us to communicate our disappointment. Your budget is silent on the deepening poverty of older Californians, their growing numbers, and the urgent need to build capacity and increase access to aging services. We were shocked that your budget proposes flat funding for the programs in the Department of Aging – programs that we rely on in our community and that are fundamental to older Californians’ health and economic security.

In our county, the services administered through the CDA – Case Management, Information & Assistance, Visiting, Respite, Adult Day Care, Senior Center Activities, LTC Ombudsman, Home-delivered and Congregate Meals, HICAP, MSSP and CBAS – are highly valued. They often represent lifelines for older people who are at risk of losing their housing, and are powerfully effective in stabilizing and preventing acute crises. All but two programs are available to the growing number of “not-poor-enough” older adults who are not eligible for Medi-Cal but nonetheless need long term care services that they cannot pay for. While our county and local governments have stepped up to augment the meager funding from the state, local funding is not enough to increase capacity to meet the need.

California’s funding for aging services has been essentially flat for over a decade while the state’s over-65 population has grown by over two million. The flat funding you propose amounts to yet another reduction as the costs of doing business rise, and perpetuates policy makers’ chronic neglect of Older Californians Act programs that has resulted in inadequate capacity, limited access, health disparities and suffering.

Fiscal Year	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2017/18	2018/19
General Fund Allocation - CDA	\$62.2 million	\$45.1 million	\$33.4 million	\$34 million	\$36.3 million

*From LAO’s Budget Package 2009-10 California Spending Plan, October 2009, and Budget Package 2018/19 California Spending Plan, November 2018.*

We are calling on you to exercise your leadership to adequately fund aging services so that communities have the tools they need to improve life and health outcomes for older

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Californians. As you can see in the chart above, a relatively small investment would return funding levels to where they were a decade ago; an adequate investment must take into account population growth and inflation.

We are heartened by the proposals in your inaugural budget that could benefit older adults, including doubling the state's Earned Income Tax Credit, expanding Medi-Cal, helping middle-income Californians better afford premiums in Covered California and moving the individual insurance market closer to universal coverage, tackling the rising cost of prescription drugs, and proffering a mix of policies and investments to address housing needs and homelessness.

But these improvements will be ineffective unless California builds capacity in the local service safety net that seniors need to stay connected and successfully navigate the challenges of aging. To build capacity, California needs to step up.

Governor Newsom, we hope that you will step up. We urge you to commit to increase California's baseline funding in the Department of Aging to invest in building the capacity of aging services to address the needs of older Californians.

Sincerely,

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

Wendy Peterson  
Director