

Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

June 18, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Preserve Services for Seniors in Final Budget

Dear Governor Newsom:

I am writing on behalf of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County, representing 40 community-based nonprofit and public providers of health and supportive services to over 80,000 older adults.

We see every day the distress and disruption that the pandemic has caused older adults who were already grappling with economic, housing and food insecurity, health and mobility challenges, and the task of navigating complex systems. Seniors who were stable have been destabilized. Family caregivers are in crisis. Most concerning, seniors with fragile health and cognitive challenges have been destabilized. The reality of the increased needs is staggering.

We are marshalling every resource available in the local continuum of services to respond, and we need every program in the continuum working at full capacity in order to succeed.

This is why we are so deeply shocked at your proposal to eliminate MSSP and CBAS, to reduce IHSS hours by 7%, and to cut other Medi-Cal benefits that are critical to the health of older Californians. It is why we are heartbroken at your proposal to reduce SSI/SSP grant levels. It is why we are so very dismayed by your plan to cut the small, much-needed recent investments in Senior Nutrition, Long Term Care Ombudsman, Aging and Disability Resource Centers and Family Caregiver Resource Centers. These programs, together with the other services in CDA, form the solution: the toolkit that we need in our community to keep low-income older people stable in the age of COVID-19, to help them manage complex medical conditions or cognitive challenges and avoid institutionalization.

Our greatest concern is your plan to eliminate CBAS and MSSP. The consequences of these eliminations to California's safety net system will be disastrous and expensive. How will working family caregivers manage without support? What are the costs when 500 MSSP staff join the ranks of the unemployed? Where will CBAS and MSSP participants go to have their complex needs met? There are not enough Skilled Nursing Home beds in the state of California to care for even a quarter of the people served by these two programs alone. When these programs have been cut in the past, people we know in our community have suffered – some died.

Though the Department of Finance has not accounted for it, we know that when safety net supports are withdrawn from 48,000 frail older Californians there will be exponentially shift higher costs to other parts of our health care system due to increased hospitalizations,

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emergency room visits and the inevitable surge in nursing home admissions. How can the state justify this, or the loss of federal matching dollars that will result from these eliminations?

How can the state – how can you – justify eliminating supports in a time of economic and public health upheaval for the thousands of low-income older Californians who have contributed to their community's culture, history and economy for decades, but who have also experienced the detrimental impact of decades of health and social disparities?

Despite real and serious fiscal challenges, the already-underfunded and stressed safety net for seniors is not the place to cut. We call on you to find another way.

Sincerely,



Wendy Peterson
Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

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