

California Commission on Aging

1300 National Drive, Suite 173 | Sacramento, CA 95834
(916) 419-7591 | CCoA@cco.ca.gov | www.ccoa.ca.gov

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor

Executive Director
Karol Swartzlander

May 27, 2020

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

RE: Opposition to May Revision Proposals Impacting Low-Income, Vulnerable, Older Adults

Dear Governor Newsom:

As the principal advocate for older Californians designated in Welfare and Institutions Code, the California Commission on Aging (CCoA) must express our strong opposition to the May Revise proposals that decimate programs and services that protect low income, frail older adults, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers.

In Executive Order N-14-19, you established the Master Plan for Aging Stakeholder Advisory Committee and called for a Master Plan for Aging by October 2020. Recognizing its importance and despite an aggressive timeline, the entire stakeholder community, including CCoA, responded vigorously to support this long overdue initiative. In the Executive Order, you acknowledged that "...all older adults, and those with disabilities, should be able to choose to remain in their communities as they age, and whereas meaningful choice requires access to a broad range of public and private programs, resources, and supports, including health, homecare, food and nutrition, human services, housing and transportation..."

The May Revise budget proposals undermine the entire purpose of a Master Plan for Aging. Eliminating programs such as Community-Based Adult Services (CBAS) and Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) impacts over 45,000 Medi-Cal eligible, frail older adults who depend on these services that enable them to live with dignity in their homes as an alternative to nursing facility care. The proposed reductions in funding for Senior Nutrition, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, the Aging & Disability Resource Connection programs, Independent Living Centers and Caregiver Resource Centers are also devastating to a network that has been historically under-funded and only recently was making progress toward meeting community needs. Restrictions in Medi-Cal eligibility and loss of optional benefits for older adults and persons with disabilities and cuts to monthly SSI/SSP benefit levels will further harm the health of this population.

On Friday, May 22, the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) announced it would begin development of a potential new Long Term Care at Home Medi-Cal State Plan Benefit with a target implementation of early 2021. Although a commendable goal, given experience with the challenges with rollout of the Coordinated Care Initiative and the three-year Whole Person Care Pilot, the proposed timeline is unrealistic.

DHCS has previously stated CalAIM is intended to incentivize development of an infrastructure to support the provision of home and community-based services and that California must first

demonstrate these services can be provided on a statewide basis before requesting they become a State Plan Benefit. Based on DHCS' own statement, we feel it highly unlikely DHCS will secure approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services by December 2020.

Furthermore, elimination of MSSP and CBAS, prior to establishment of an alternative, is a direct violation of the 1999 Supreme Court Olmstead Decision, which affirmed individuals with disabilities of all ages have a right to receive state funded services and supports in the community rather than institutions.

Finally, older Californians are the most impacted population by the COVID-19 pandemic as individuals over the age of 65 account for over 79% of COVID-19 deaths statewide. A stunning 42% of the state's total deaths have occurred in skilled nursing facilities.

Older adults and individuals with underlying chronic medical conditions were the first populations you urged to remain home when the pandemic struck, and you recently indicated this population will have to remain home for the foreseeable future. Savings derived from curtailing these programs is far less than the costs the state will bear when these individuals are hospitalized or placed in nursing homes due to the lack of access to appropriate care – which could literally be a death sentence in the current environment.

We recognize these are challenging financial times and the future is uncertain. However, given your own personal experience with an ailing older adult, we understand you recognize the vulnerability of the individuals impacted by these May Revise proposals. We respectfully ask you direct your budget analysts to think more creatively to resolve budget shortfalls without relying on proposals that disproportionately impact the health and well-being of the most vulnerable older adults and individuals with disabilities, thereby demonstrating, that your Administration values the lives of all Californians.

Sincerely,



Betsy Butler
Chair

CC:

Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary

Keely Martin Bosler, Director, California Department of Finance

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services Agency

Dr. Brad Gilbert, Director, Department of Health Care Services

Kim McCoy Wade, Director, California Department of Aging