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Board of Supervisors

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Belia Ramos
Chair

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Caroline Menjivar, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub. No. 3
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Joaquin Arambula, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: In Home Supportive Services: Increase County Administrative Funding—SUPPORT
\$240.2 million State General Fund Request**

Dear Chair Menjivar and Chair Arambula:

The County of Napa respectfully requests your support for the \$240.2 million State General Fund requested by the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) to address underfunding of social worker and related staffing costs in the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. This funding is necessary to ensure timely access to IHSS services and to meet growing demand by older adults and persons with disabilities.

California's population of older adults age 65 and older is projected to reach 25 percent of the population, or 8.6 million Californians, by 2030. IHSS is a key strategy in meeting the goals of the Master Plan for Aging to enable older adults to age with dignity and independence. As of October 2022, over 691,000 older adults and persons with disabilities receive in-home care from 600,514 trusted IHSS caregivers in California. Recently enacted expansions in Medi-Cal eligibility, including to undocumented persons aged 50 and older and the removal of the Medi-Cal asset limit test, will allow more older adults and persons with disabilities to qualify for IHSS services to remain safely in their homes and community, avoiding costly hospitalization or institutionalization. These important policy changes are welcomed and align with California's Aging Master Plan.

However, county IHSS programs are not prepared for this influx of older adults into the IHSS program due to inadequate funding of the program's administrative operations. The IHSS program relies on social workers to conduct assessments for older adults applying to the program to determine eligibility and level of need for in-home assistance. Once found eligible for services, IHSS staff assist consumers with identifying and enrolling their provider of choice to deliver personal care services. IHSS staff ensure timely payments to those providers and they carry out many other administrative duties required under both state and federal laws and regulations.

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The current funding gap for IHSS staffing worsens each year as the population of IHSS consumers increases, due to population growth and new laws that broaden eligibility into the program. This is due to the State utilizing an artificially low wage rate for social workers established in 2017-18 which has not been adjusted in five years. Additionally, the methodology does not pay for all the workload associated in processing applications, despite the need to conduct the work to determine if an older adult or person with disabilities is eligible to receive those services. This results in high caseloads for existing IHSS staff which hampers their ability to ensure IHSS applications are processed on a timely basis and that reassessments occur at least every 12 months, as required under state and federal law.

We believe it is critical to address this funding gap now to enable the IHSS program to properly serve the growing population of older adults and persons with disabilities, enabling these Californians to live independently and to age with dignity as articulated in California’s Aging Master Plan.

By way of local example, Napa County’s IHSS caseload has increased by 17% in the past three years, and with Medi-Cal expanding to include undocumented adults combined with the elimination of the asset test, caseloads throughout the State will continue to increase. Locally, we anticipate more significant caseload growth, given that over 20% of Napa County residents are already age 65 or older (markedly higher than the State average of 15%) and per 2020 Census data, our under-age-65 disabled population is also higher than that of the State (7.5% vs. 6.8%, respectively).

Simply put, the IHSS administrative allocation has not kept pace with the cost to operate this critically important program that serves our most vulnerable residents keeping them in their homes. This is an opportunity for the State to adequately fund this program in alignment with the vision set forth in its Master Plan for Aging, including Goal 3 “Equity & Inclusion, Not Isolation” and Goal 4 “Caregiving That Works.”

For these reasons, Napa County urges your support.

Sincerely,

Belia Ramos
Chair, Napa County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members and Staff of the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Missy Talbot, County Welfare Directors Association