September 13, 2021

Dear Members of California’s Congressional Delegation,

The undersigned California organizations and individuals urge our members of Congress to fully fund the historic Better Care Better Jobs Act to strengthen and expand the Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) infrastructure and workforce. This investment would provide access to HCBS to **574,000** more aging adults and people with disabilities in California, create **93,000** new direct care jobs, and would allow **191,000** family caregivers to start a new job or rejoin the paid workforce.¹

During the pandemic, the entire Medicaid program has been under unprecedented strain. This is especially true for California’s Medicaid HCBS system as even more aging adults and people with disabilities needed support at home to avoid nursing facilities and other institutions, where the risk of death was exceedingly high. In California, 20 percent of COVID-19 deaths have occurred in nursing facilities.² At the same time, providers have been forced to shut down HCBS programs due to chronic underfunding, workers have been laid off, people with disabilities and aging adults haven’t had the supports they need, and their families have been left to fill the gaps, at the expense of their own jobs and responsibilities.

The vast majority of people with disabilities and aging adults want to live in their own homes and communities. Despite that fact, over 95,000 older adults and people with disabilities are residing in nursing facilities in California while thousands of Californians are on waitlists for HCBS and others have limited access to HCBS in their counties.³ Due to a long history of underfunding and lack of investment in the HCBS infrastructure at both the federal and state levels, our state’s HCBS system is not able to meet the demand or prepare for the future. Receiving long-term services and supports at home is not simply a matter of personal preference, it improves individuals’ quality of life and it is more cost-effective for the state.

In California, the Better Care Better Jobs Act would provide over **574,000 more older adults and people with disabilities** with needed HCBS. It would also make it possible for **191,000 family caregivers** in California to return to work while also creating **93,000 new direct care jobs**. These investments are desperately needed to ensure aging adults and people with disabilities in California are able to receive the care and supports they need to remain living at home and connected to their communities today and for generations to come.
The disproportionate burden of the gaps in California’s HCBS system fall on women and people of color with limited income and wealth who have the responsibility of providing care. The majority of the direct care workforce are women of color. This workforce includes home care workers, personal care attendants, and direct support professionals, who provide these vital services yet have been devalued and underpaid for decades. Moreover, the lack of support for the workforce means that the responsibility of care and support often falls on unpaid family caregivers. In California, there are almost five million family caregivers providing approximately 4 billion hours of unpaid time each year.\textsuperscript{iv} Investment in HCBS would help address inequities and strengthen our economy by providing for good jobs for direct care workers and allowing family caregivers to rejoin the workforce.

Thankfully, Congress included a short-term, one-year bump of 10 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentage dedicated to expanding and strengthening Medicaid Home and Community-Based services in the American Rescue Plan. California is using this funding to recover from the pandemic and fill in the most critical gaps. While this one-time boost will help California cope with the immediate harm and aftermath of COVID-19, longer-term investment is crucial. The baseline that existed prior to the pandemic was inadequate and has been for decades. Instead, to transform our HCBS system to meet the long-term services and supports needs of our residents, California needs long-term investment like the Better Care Better Jobs Act.

This is a critical opportunity to build the Medicaid HCBS system in California. We urge our lawmakers and leadership to \textbf{fully fund the Better Care Better Jobs Act} and invest in our state’s Medicaid HCBS infrastructure and the workforce that provides these essential services.

Respectfully,

Justice in Aging
ACC Senior Services
Advocate4IHSS
Aging Services Collaborative of Santa Clara County
Alzheimer’s Los Angeles
Alzheimer’s Orange County
American Society on Aging
Arcadia Adult Day Health Care Center
Arcadia of Hollywood Adult Day Health Care Center
Area 1 Agency on Aging
Asian Resources, Inc
Association of California Caregiver Resource Centers
Bay Area Community Services
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
CA Association of Public Authorities
California Access Coalition
California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform
California Alliance for Retired Americans
California Association of Area Agencies on Aging
California Black Health Network
California Commission on Aging
California Community Living Network
California Council of Community Behavioral Health Agencies (CBHA)
California Council of the Blind
California Disability Services Association
California Elder Justice Coalition
California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC)
California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA)
California Women's Law Center
Californians for Disability Rights
CalPACE
Center for Caregiver Advancement
Center for Elders' Independence - PACE
Choice in Aging
Circle of Friends Adult Day Health Care, Inc.
Community Access Center
Community Bridges Elderday
Crisis Support Services of Alameda County
DayBreak Adult Care Centers
Disability Rights California
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Easterseals Southern California
Empowering Pacific Islander Communities (EPIC)
Family Bridges
Family Caregiver Alliance
Grief-"Journey to Loss"
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network
Health Plan of San Mateo
Homebridge
Huntington Senior Care Network
Inland Empire Latino Coalition
Institute On Aging
Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley
LeadingAge California
Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County
Legal Assistance for Seniors
LIFE ElderCare
LifeLong Medical Care
LifeSTEPS
Meals on Wheels California
Meals on Wheels of Alameda County
NAACP Pomona Valley
National Health Law Program (NHeLP)
Pacific Adult Day Health Care
Partners in Care Foundation
Personal Assistance Services Council
PRC
Regent West Adult Day Health Care
Ren Ai Adult Day Health Care
Rolling Start, Inc. Center for Independent Living
San Francisco AIDS Foundation
Santa Maria Wisdom Center
Senior Advocates of the Desert
Senior and Disability Action
Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County
Senior Support Program Alameda County
Seniors Council of Santa Cruz & San Benito Counties
Service Center for Independent Life
Serving Seniors
Shorkend Care Management
Silicon Valley Independent Living Center
Sistahs Aging with Grace & Elegance
Social Security Works California
SOS Meals on Wheels
Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living (SCRS-IL)
Spectrum Community Services, Inc.
St. Barnabas Senior Services
St. Mary's Center
State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Strategies To Empower People
Sunny Cal Adult Day Health Care
Sunrise Fiduciary
The Arc California
The Center for Independent Living
UDW/AFSCME Local 3930
Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay
VTC Enterprises
WelbeHealth
West Health Institute
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Winters Elder Day Council
WISE & Healthy Aging
Individuals

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Cc:

Governor Gavin Newsom
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health and Human Services
Michelle Baass, Director, Department of Health Care Services
Jacey Cooper, State Medicaid Director
Kim McCoy Wade, Director, California Department of Aging

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i Better Care Better Jobs Act, “How American Families Benefit,”

ii California Department of Public Health, Skilled Nursing Facilities: COVID-19,” last accessed Sep. 13, 2021,

iii CHHS Open Data, “Community Care Licensing – Residential Elder Care Facility Locations,”

iv “California’s Master Plan for Aging,” Jan. 2021,
https://www.aging.ca.gov/download.ashx?IE0rcNUV0zZe1bBmXluFyg%3D%3D.