

Justice in Aging's 2025 Legislative and Budget Priorities for California

For 2025, Justice in Aging has prioritized these key legislative and budget proposals. These proposals span our issue areas of health and long-term care, housing, economic security, and elder justice, and advance several of the goals of the Master Plan for Aging.

As the state with the highest number of seniors living in poverty, and because California often leads the nation in innovative, progressive policies, our work to advance the needs of low-income older adults in California improves the lives of millions, and can serve as a model for other states.

HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

Defending Medi-Cal from Federal Threats

- In California, over 2.3 million older adults and people with disabilities rely on Medi-Cal. The state receives \$112 billion in federal funding to administer the program. Medi-Cal helps over 1.75 million dually-eligible older adults pay their Medicare cost-sharing and covers vital benefits that Medicare does not, such as dental, vision, hearing, and non-emergency medical transportation. Over 900,000 older adults and people with disabilities rely on Medi-Cal for coverage of long-term services and supports.
- Current proposals at the federal level threaten to significantly reduce funding and restrict eligibility for Medi-Cal, which would result in cutting health and long-term care for California's seniors. Justice in Aging is working at the federal and state level to oppose any cuts to Medicaid.

SB 433 (Wahab): Residential Care Facility for the Elderly (RCFE) Room and Board Rates

- This bill would establish statutory room and board rate protection for all Assisted Living Waiver and Nursing Facility Transition/Diversion participants regardless of their source of income.
- Co-Sponsored by Justice in Aging and California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform.

Implement Medi-Cal Share of Cost Reform

- This budget request of \$33 million General Fund in FY 2025-26 and \$80 million ongoing General Fund would implement the reform approved in the FY 2022-23 budget to increase the 'maintenance need income level' of the Medi-Cal Share of Cost program to 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The current Medi-Cal Share of Cost program forces older adults

and people with disabilities to live on \$600 per month in order to access Medi-Cal services, trapping them in deep poverty. It is critical for California to take steps to implement this reform so that older adults and people with disabilities will no longer have to make the impossible choice of paying for their health care or making rent and having food on the table.

- This request is being championed by Justice in Aging and Western Center on Law and Poverty.

HOUSING

Preserving Programs to Prevent Older Adult Homelessness

- Older adults are the fastest growing group of people experiencing homelessness in California. It is imperative that California invest in homelessness prevention programs in order to reverse this alarming trend.
- Justice in Aging is supporting efforts to increase funding for the Home Safe Program and the Housing and Disability Advocacy (HDAP) Program, both of which have been successful programs serving older adults at risk of homelessness. It is critical that we continue to invest in programs that are working.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

End Poverty for Older Adults & People with Disabilities Receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/State Supplementary Payment (SSP)

- Provide an ongoing cost-of-living increase for the State Supplementary Payment (SSP): This budget request would provide an ongoing annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) for the SSP grant. A COLA for the state portion of the SSI/SSP benefit would ensure that low-income older adults and individuals with disabilities in California can keep up with rising costs for basic needs like utilities, food, medicine and rent.
- Revive an Emergency Grant Program for Older Adults & People with Disabilities: This budget request would appropriate \$20 million ongoing funding in 2025-2026 to revive an Emergency Grant program (WIC 12550) as a 5-year, time-limited program. The program would provide financial assistance in a one-time lump sum to recipients of SSI, IHSS, or CAPI to support older adults and people with disabilities facing emergencies.
- Lift SSI/SSP grants to at least the Federal Poverty Line: This budget request would provide a five-step increase over five years to bring and keep the SSI/SSP grant at 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) as a down payment to the Elder Economic Security Index, which reflects the true cost of living for SSI/SSP recipients.
- These budget requests are being championed by the Californians for SSI Coalition.

ELDER JUSTICE

AB 561 (Quirk Silva): Alternative Service of Elder Abuse Restraining Orders

- This bill would update the elder abuse restraining order statute to allow for alternative service

of these restraining orders, as well as to allow for remote appearance at hearings. This change would mirror the protections that victims of domestic violence have when they seek restraining orders.

- Co-sponsored by Justice in Aging, Bet Tzedek Legal Services, Elder Law & Advocacy, San Diego City Attorney, Civil Prosecutors Coalition.

Please contact Yasmin Peled, Director, California Government Affairs, with any questions on these proposals: ypeled@justiceinaging.org