

Senior Services Coalition
of Alameda County

December 16, 2008

Senator Loni Hancock
State Capitol
Room 4061
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: (916) 327-1997

RE: Proposed cuts to SSI/SSP, CAPI, IHSS, Medi-Cal 133% Aged Blind and Disabled, Medi-Cal "Optional" Benefits, and proposed diversion of Prop 63 Mental Health funds

Dear Senator Hancock,

On behalf of Alameda County's providers of senior services, I ask you to preserve California's safety net for seniors, including health, supportive and social services. These services are vital to the health of our community and our state, and we depend upon you to represent us in advocating for the well being of elderly, frail and disabled residents.

You will be considering proposed cuts to SSI/SSP, CAPI, IHSS, and Medi-Cal. These cuts will deny thousands of frail and needy Alameda County residents the assistance they need to continue living safely in the community. **We urge the committee to reject these cuts, as well as proposed cuts to CalWORKS that will deny access to child care and cash assistance for thousands of Alameda County children.**

When the Governor signed the budget on September 23, he made \$510 million in last-minute line item veto cuts to safety-net services for seniors, children, families and people with disabilities – cuts that are already devastating programs and lives.

The 22,000 seniors in Alameda County who receive SSI/SSP are among California's most vulnerable populations. These adults are least able to absorb an income loss, and are already struggling to absorb new Part D prescription drug co-pays and the rising costs of living. Even more shocking and cruel, the proposed elimination of CAPI would devastate the lives of over 930 frail elderly legal immigrants in Alameda County.

The proposal to eliminate Medi-Cal Optional Benefits will deny essential services for millions of Californians managing chronic diseases. Optional benefits – which include dental care, acupuncture, audiology, optometry, optical, chiropractic, podiatry, psychology, speech therapy, and incontinence creams/washes – are not optional, but essential.

The proposal to eliminate full-scope Medi-Cal for recipients in the Aged, Blind and Disabled "133%" category will deny coverage to a significant number of the 39,000 Alameda County seniors who rely on Medi-Cal. Without coverage for their health care or alternative resources, these seniors would be unable to afford preventive healthcare and treatment for chronic conditions.

The proposal to cut domestic services for many frail elderly and disabled children and adults who receive IHSS, and to cut the state's contribution to IHSS worker wages. These actions will deny services to people who cannot "get by" on their own. Without service hours and without

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reliable, well-trained workers, thousands of IHSS recipients will end up in hospitals and nursing homes at tremendous cost to the taxpayers.

In Alameda County, Prop 63 Mental Health Act funds are providing key services to hard to reach seniors and homeless elderly with significant mental health problems. Diverting Prop 63 funds would put these one-of-a-kind programs at risk.

These proposed cuts will fail to balance the budget. The programs slated for cuts are part of the solution to California's budget crisis. These services are preventive, enabling vulnerable people to continue to live in the community at a fraction of the cost of hospital or nursing homes. We urge you to support these services.

Sincerely,

Wendy Peterson
Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County