



Contra Costa County

IHSS Public Authority • Advisory Committee

500 Ellinwood Way Ste. 110 • Pleasant Hill • CA • 94523

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, Room 107
Martinez, CA 94553

March 17, 2015

RE: SSI/SSP in 2015 – 2016 State Budget

Dear Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors:

The Contra Costa County In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Public Authority is a public agency that has an Advisory Committee that advocates for the improvement of the IHSS Program in general as well as on a variety of other disability-related issues, such as the Supplemental Security Income and the State Supplemental Payments.

As a committee that supports and advocates for the elderly and people with disabilities, we feel that an increase in the monthly Social Security Income and the State Supplemental Payments (SSI/SSP) will provide the consumers of the IHSS program an increased ability to not only purchase healthier foods and meet day-to-day living expenses, but also to provide them with the opportunity to live in a more accommodating environment.

As you know, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a Federal program designed to help aged, blind, and people with disabilities who have little or no income to meet their basic needs. The state funded portion of this program is called the State Supplemental Payment (SSP). The Governor's budget is unfortunately silent on the plight of SSI recipients. We are asking the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors to support our consumers' plea for the state government to prioritize funding for SSI/SSP in the 2015 – 2016 state budget.

How SSI/SSP Grant Cuts Pushed 1 Million Californians into Poverty

In January of 2009, the SSI/SSP grant of \$907 a month was worth 100.5 percent of the federal poverty level for a single individual. Since then, SSP grants were cut repeatedly, and cost of living adjustments (COLA) were not provided. Individual SSI/SSP grants are now worth just 90.7 percent of the federal poverty level, but if these cuts had not occurred, the grants would be worth 106.7 percent of the federal poverty level, according to the California Budget Project (CBP). These cuts have pushed more than 1 million blind, aged, and disabled Californians below the

federal poverty level. This is a significant reason we have seen California's poverty rate skyrocket to the highest in the nation according to the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure.

These cuts are being felt statewide, and have caused a new coalition of over 200 organizations called Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) to advocate for increases in SSI/SSP funding. These cuts come at a high cost to communities across the state by forcing SSI/SSP recipients to rely on emergency public services and private networks to meet food, shelter, and health needs.

Who Is Impacted by Low SSI/SSP Grants?

Nearly 1.3 million blind, aged, and disabled Californians rely on the federal/state SSI/SSP program. Nearly two thirds of the caseload is composed of blind and disabled individuals, with about one-third of recipients eligible due to age. More than half the caseload is composed of women.

The Magnitude of Cuts to SSI/SSP

California periodically provided an annual COLA on the total SSI/SSP amount until the SSP COLA was repealed in 2009. Moreover, monthly state contributions to the SSI/SSP grant for individuals have been cut from \$233 to the federal minimum of \$156, a \$77 monthly reduction per person. The state contribution to SSI/SSP grants for couples in January of 2009 was \$568 a month but has been reduced to \$396.20, a \$171.80 monthly cut.

In the 2007 – 2008 Fiscal Year, the state spent \$3.9 billion on the state portion of the SSI grant, after adjusting for inflation according to the CBP. In contrast, the Governor proposes to spend only \$2.5 billion this fiscal year. That is a cut of \$1.4 billion – all absorbed by SSI/SSP recipients who are then forced to make difficult trade-offs between food, housing and medicine. In other words, the proposed budget is based on more than \$1 billion in so-called savings that, in fact, come at a high price by diminishing an essential source of income for more than 1 million Californians.

Restore the SSI/SSP Grant Cuts and the COLA

It is time to reverse these cuts. No one on SSI should be living in poverty or even at the Supplemental Poverty Level. The Contra Costa County IHSS Public Authority Advisory Committee is requesting that the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors support the IHSS consumers' plea for the State Legislature to restore both the SSP grant cuts and the cost of living adjustment.

Sincerely,



Sydney Anderson

Advisory Committee Chair