

# 2025-26 Policy & Budget Priorities

The California Collaborative for Long-Term Services and Supports (CCLTSS) is a coalition of statewide and local advocates, service providers, and community organizations working to advance an integrated, person-centered system of care for older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. Each year, the Collaborative identifies priority policy and budget initiatives that reflect the needs, challenges, and opportunities facing California's aging and disability communities.

This year, CCLTSS is focused on three overarching themes essential to building a more equitable and sustainable system of care—each representing a critical opportunity to support older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers across the state.

# 1 Protecting, Enhancing, and Expanding Access to High-Quality LTSS

California's population of older adults and people with disabilities is growing rapidly, increasing demand for a strong, responsive system of Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS)—which includes both institutional care and services delivered in the home and community. A core component of this system is Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), which help individuals live with dignity and independence in their own homes rather than in institutional settings.

Recent federal policy shifts have raised concerns about the future of HCBS, which—unlike institutional care—are optional under Medicaid and therefore especially vulnerable to funding cuts. Without robust HCBS, individuals are more likely to face unmet needs, avoidable hospitalizations, and premature or unnecessary institutionalization.

Sustained investment in high-quality LTSS—with strong HCBS offerings—is essential to advancing equity, improving health outcomes, preserving

autonomy, and using public resources effectively. Despite federal pressures, California must remain committed to strengthening LTSS access, workforce capacity, and service delivery to meet current needs and prepare for the growing demand ahead.

# 2 Advancing Housing Stability, Accessibility, and Affordability

California's ongoing housing crisis has made it clear that stable, affordable, and accessible housing is foundational to health and well-being. For older adults and people with disabilities, the lack of suitable housing increases reliance on costly institutional care and undermines efforts to support aging and living in the community.

The crisis is particularly acute among older Californians. A growing number are aging into homelessness—many for the first time. In some counties, individuals aged 55 and older make up nearly half of the homeless population. These individuals often face complex health needs that are worsened by housing instability, leading to higher rates of emergency room visits, hospitalizations, and premature death. In addition to the human cost, homelessness places enormous strain on public systems. It is more expensive to respond to homelessness than to prevent it—especially when addressing the needs of older adults and people with disabilities.

California must treat housing as a core element of its LTSS strategy. This includes expanding affordable, accessible housing options; integrating housing with health and supportive services; and scaling proven solutions that prevent homelessness before it begins.

# 3 Promoting Safety & Inclusivity

As California's population ages, ensuring safety and inclusion for older adults and people with disabilities is more urgent than ever. Financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect remain persistent threats—particularly for those who are isolated, dependent on others for care, or navigating complex systems without adequate support. Addressing these challenges requires proactive efforts to strengthen oversight, accountability, and early intervention.

Inclusion also means recognizing and embracing the diversity of aging experiences. Older adults must be visible and valued in all aspects of public life—from emergency response systems to policymaking processes. Ensuring accessible participation, age-friendly services, and robust protections are

essential to building communities where everyone can age with dignity and security.

At its core, this theme reflects a commitment to equity, visibility, and justice. California must invest in policies and practices that protect vulnerable individuals while fostering environments where all people—regardless of age, ability, or background—feel safe, respected, and included.

#### **Critical Bills & Budget Requests**



#### Protecting, Enhancing, and Expanding Access to High-Quality LTSS.

### **Budget Request: ADRC Budget Request**

\$15 million one-time General Fund in 2025-26

The Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) program provides a trusted "No Wrong Door" network that helps older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers navigate complex LTSS. Despite their vital role, ADRCs remain severely underfunded, with only \$10 million annually to support 24 designated and 2 emerging ADRCs statewide leaving many regions without equitable access to these essential services. With California's aging and disability populations growing, the need for accessible, person-centered support is greater than ever. Without increased investment, the state risks deepening disparities in access to care.

## **Budget Request:** Raise Our Rates - Community Based Adult Services

#### \$74.8 million ongoing General Fund in 2025-26

The CBAS program is a vital part of California's LTSS system, helping over 42,000 older adults and people with disabilities remain safely in their communities through health, social, and therapeutic services. However, low Medi-Cal reimbursement rates are threatening the program's sustainability, with the current rate falling nearly \$50 short of the estimated daily cost to operate a center. As a result, CBAS centers are closing across the state, leaving some counties without access to

any services at all. Meanwhile, demand continues to rise, with enrollment up 27% since 2021. Without urgent investment, more closures are likely, forcing individuals into more costly institutional care. Stabilizing CBAS is critical to preserving access, delaying institutionalization, reducing hospitalizations, and ensuring dignity and quality of life for California's aging and disabled populations.

# AB 315 (Bonta): <u>Medi-Cal: Home and Community-Based</u> Alternatives Waiver

AB 315 is a fiscally responsible measure that directs the Department of Health Care Services to expand the Medi-Cal Home and Community-Based Alternatives (HCBA) Waiver, eliminating enrollment caps to serve all eligible individuals. Currently, over 5,400 medically fragile Californians remain on a waitlist, despite the waiver's proven cost-effectiveness—an expansion of 1,800 slots in 2024-25 resulted in nearly \$12.9 million in savings. The bill also mandates a comprehensive rate study to assess the adequacy and sustainability of provider payments, many of which have remained stagnant since 2006. By addressing both capacity and reimbursement challenges, AB 315 aims to strengthen California's long-term care infrastructure, ensuring that individuals with complex medical needs can receive appropriate care in community settings.

### Budget Request: <u>Medi-Cal Share of Cost Reform</u> \$33 million General Fund in FY 2025-26, \$80 million ongoing General Fund

California's Medi-Cal Share of Cost (SOC) program forces low-income older adults and people with disabilities to spend more than half of their monthly income on health care costs just to qualify for coverage—leaving them with only \$600 a month to meet all other basic needs, a figure unchanged since 1989. As a result, many individuals forgo critical care, risking unnecessary hospitalizations, institutionalization, and heightened strain on families. Raising the maintenance need level to 138% of the federal poverty line would align income eligibility with free

Medi-Cal thresholds, ensuring people can access health services without falling into extreme poverty. Reforming the SOC program is essential to advancing equity, promoting independence, and preventing costly health crises across California's aging and disabled populations.

#### **Budget Request: Personal Needs Allowance Increase**

\$500,000 General Funding in FY 2025–26, \$4 million ongoing

California's Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) for Medi-Cal beneficiaries living in long-term care facilities has remained at just \$35 per month since 1985—leaving residents with little means to afford basic necessities like hygiene items, clothing, and communication. California's PNA is among the lowest in the nation, despite having one of the highest costs of living. Raising the PNA to \$50 per month, and tying future increases to Social Security's annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA), would restore dignity and autonomy for over 60,000 Californians in long-term care.



### Advance Housing Stability, Accessibility, and Affordability

### **Budget Request: APS Home Safe**

\$88.8 million ongoing General Fund in 2025-26

The APS Home Safe Program is a critical homelessness prevention resource for older and dependent adults at risk of abuse, neglect, and housing instability. Administered by the California Department of Social Services, Home Safe offers intensive case management, eviction prevention, relocation support, and housing stabilization services. In FY 2023–24, 62% of participants exited to permanent housing, and 76% retained their housing six months after leaving the program, far outpacing success rates in other homelessness programs. However, with funding running out, six counties have already closed their Home Safe programs, and more are winding down. Without renewed investment, California risks losing a proven intervention that keeps vulnerable adults safely housed and reduces reliance on costly crisis services like emergency shelters, hospitals, and institutions.

# **Budget Request: HDAP \$150M One-Time Funds Over Three Years**

#### \$150 million one-time General Fund in FY 2025-26

The Housing and Disability Advocacy Program (HDAP) is a proven model that helps older adults and people with disabilities experiencing or at risk of homelessness secure both permanent housing and critical income supports needed for long-term stability. Since 2017, HDAP has served over 30,000 individuals and achieved significantly higher rates of permanent housing placement and benefits enrollment than other homeless service programs. However, without additional funding, HDAP is projected to cut services by more than 40% in FY 2025-26, threatening progress made in addressing homelessness among vulnerable populations.



#### Promote Safety & Inclusivity

# **Budget Request: Utilizing Existing Reserves to Support Local LTC Ombudsman Programs**

#### \$15.9 million in ongoing annual funding from existing special fund reserves

The California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association (CLTCOA) is seeking increased support to address critical gaps in oversight and advocacy for residents of California's 14 types of long-term care facilities. Local Ombudsman programs respond to more than 34,000 complaints annually and provide essential, resident-centered services including abuse investigations, rights education, and support during facility transitions—but current funding levels are insufficient to meet rising demands and comply with state and federal mandates for quarterly unannounced visits. Additional investment would support increased staffing, training for newly recruited volunteers, and a more sustainable baseline for local programs, ensuring older and dependent adults in care facilities receive the protection and advocacy they deserve.

# AB 871 (Stefani): <u>Mandated Reporters of Suspected Financial</u> <u>Abuse of an Elder or Dependent Adult</u>

AB 871 strengthens protections against elder financial abuse by requiring financial institutions to provide annual training on detecting financial exploitation and reporting suspected abuse to both local authorities and federal agencies. With older adults increasingly targeted by sophisticated scams—and financial exploitation accounting for 36% of Adult Protective Services (APS) reports—this bill aims to improve early detection, enhance coordination across agencies, and increase the likelihood of recovering stolen funds.

#### AB 1069 (Bains): Older Adults: Emergency Shelters

AB 1069 strengthens emergency response for older adults and people with disabilities by requiring emergency shelters to grant Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) and Aging and Disability Resource Connections (ADRCs) access to shelters during disasters to provide essential services and supports. Older adults and people with disabilities face higher risks during emergencies, yet emergency shelters are often unprepared to meet their specific needs. By integrating aging and disability service providers directly into emergency shelter operations, this bill ensures that vulnerable individuals receive the care, accommodations, and assistance needed to stay safe during natural disasters and other emergencies.

# SB 470 (Laird): <u>Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act:</u> <u>Teleconferencing</u>

SB 470 modernizes California's open meeting laws by permanently extending the remote participation flexibilities originally introduced during the pandemic, which have expanded public access and inclusion in state boards and commissions. By maintaining options for remote testimony and participation, while ensuring transparency and accountability, the bill removes barriers that have historically excluded older adults, people with disabilities, rural residents, and others unable to travel. SB 470 cements these reforms by eliminating the 2026 sunset date, ensuring that accessibility, equity, and full civic participation remain cornerstones of California's decision-making process.

Together, these investments reflect California's commitment to building a future where all older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers can live with dignity, security, and opportunity. While the proposed initiatives represent less than 1% of the 2025–26 state budget, they would make a profound and lasting difference in the lives of millions of Californians—and allow the state to sustain critical momentum.

Protecting and strengthening access to high-quality LTSS, expanding affordable and accessible housing, and ensuring safety and inclusion are not optional—they are essential to meeting the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population. The legislative and budget proposals outlined here offer a clear, achievable path forward. By acting now, California can protect hard-won progress, address urgent gaps, and lay the foundation for a more equitable, sustainable system of care for generations to come.

#### **Our Member Organizations**

The California Collaborative is comprised of over 50 organizations representing providers, caregivers, advocates, and consumers. Regional Coalitions\* represent local aging and disability networks that span over 40 of California's 58 counties.

**AARP** California

Age Forward Coalition of San Mateo County\*

Aging Services Collaborative of Santa Clara County\*

Alzheimer's Association

Association of Regional Center Agencies Bay Area Senior Health Policy Coalition\*

CA Assisted Living Association

CA Association for Adult Day Services
CA Association of Area Agencies on Aging

CA Association of Caregiver Resource Centers

CA Association of Health Plans

CA Association of Public Authorities

CA Commission on Aging CA Council of the Blind

**CA Disability Services Association** 

**CA Elder Justice Coalition** 

CA Foundation for Independent Living Centers

CA Health Advocates
CA Hospital Association
CA IHSS Consumer Alliance

CA Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association

CA Senior Legislature

Californians for Disability Rights

CalPACE

Central Valley LTSS Coalition\*

Coalition for Compassionate Care of CA

Community Living Implementation Council of Nevada Co.\*

Contra Costa Advisory Council on Aging\*
County Welfare Directors Association of CA

Disability Rights CA

Diversability Advocacy Network\*

Family Caregiver Alliance

Homebridge

Inland LTSS Coalition\*

Justice in Aging LeadingAge CA

Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition\*

Monterey Bay Aging & Disability Resource Coalition\*

MSSP Site Association

Orange County Aging Services Collaborative\*

Placer County ADRC Coalition\*
San Diego Senior Alliance

Santa Barbara County Adult & Aging Network\*

Senior Coalition of Stanislaus County\*
Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County\*

**United Domestic Workers** 

Ventura County Hospital to Home Alliance\*

Village Movement California

Anthem Health Plan Marin County Coalition\* Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance\*