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California State Senate  
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Speaker Robert Rivas  
California Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8330  
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The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget & Fiscal  
Review  
California State Senate  
1020 N Street, Room 502  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
California State Assembly  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

January 24, 2024

**Re: Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) Coalition Response to the Governor's Proposed 2024-2025 Budget**

Dear California Budget Leaders,

Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) is a coalition of older adults and people living with disabilities who rely on the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) /State Supplementary Payments (SSP) grant with support from more than 200 organizations across the state. The coalition advocates to provide sufficient funding to California's seniors and people living with disabilities so they can reach economic self-sufficiency, rise above the poverty level, and live with dignity. We are writing to express our gratitude to the Governor and state legislature for providing meaningful steps toward reversing the Great Recession era cuts to SSP in the 2023-2024 state budget and to share our response to the Governor's January 10th budget proposal.

We appreciate the administration's commitment to ensuring no cuts to SSI/SSP grants and the coalition is grateful for the Legislature's and Governor's commitment to maintaining the 9.2% SSP increase that took effect on January 1, 2024.

As we look ahead, state leaders must remain committed to not only protecting but also strengthening programs impacting SSI recipients to reduce homelessness, support local communities, and help seniors and people with disabilities live in dignity.

**We look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to protect and strengthen anti-poverty investments to support California's 1.1 million SSI recipients, including 100,000 children, in the final 2024-25 budget.**

SSI/SSP recipients increasingly rely on emergency food, shelter, and health providers to stay alive. Many are becoming homeless and going hungry, requiring expensive food, medical, and nursing home services that are needed in part because the grants do not cover basic needs. The CA4SSI Coalition has two budget requests this year to support low-income Californians that we ask the Senate and Assembly budget committees to agendize and prioritize:

- **Lifting SSP grants to ensure no SSI/SSP recipient is under the Federal Poverty Level and providing an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment** ([Factsheet](#))
  - Initiate a three-step increase to bring the SSI/SSP grants to 100% of the federal poverty level over three years, which would require \$282.7 million in 2025, 327M in 2026, and 340.9M in 2027.
- **10M to provide financial support to SSI/SSP recipients when special circumstances arise** ([Factsheet](#))

**Lifting SSP grants to ensure no SSI/SSP recipient is under the Federal Poverty Level and providing an ongoing cost-of-living adjustment continues to be the number one priority for SSI recipients.**

We are grateful for the decisive action taken in the last three budgets to reverse the devastating SSP grant cuts that date back more than a decade to the Great Recession. These actions have brought us close to raising the SSP grants to where they were before the Great Recession when the individual SSI/SSP grant was 100.5% of the Federal Poverty Level.

We must finally close that gap and bring every SSI/SSP older adult and individual with a disability above the poverty level. California's housing crisis means that SSI recipients remain in dire need, and many continue to be at risk of homelessness and unstable housing. SSI/SSP grants are so low that they [cover the cost of a studio apartment and food in only 10 of California's 58 counties](#)—and far less than that in counties as diverse as Los Angeles and San Benito. Rent, food, and healthcare costs would exceed ALL counties' SSI/SSP grants.

*"They give you enough so you can stay alive but still struggle and be in pain. It's not enough to have any quality of life." —Sharon, CA.*

Ultimately, we must go beyond reaching only the Federal Poverty Level. To truly end poverty and support aging with dignity in California for low-income older adults and people with disabilities on SSI and to improve racial equity as Californians age, the Master Plan for Aging's bold vision should become a reality. The plan includes using the Elder Economic Index to determine the adequacy of resources (as noted in

the [Master Plan for Aging's Goal 5](#), Affording Aging, Strategy C: Protection from Poverty & Hunger, Initiative 129).

Adjusting the SSP grant for inflation will ensure that the grants do not continue to lose value each year due to inflation or unexpected cost pressures. An ongoing state COLA will ensure that the SSI/SSP grant keeps pace with the cost of living and remains above the FPL.

In 2009 and 2010, California cut the State Supplementary Payment (SSP) for SSI/SSP recipients and repealed the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the SSP grant. If the state had not made these cuts and provided an SSP COLA yearly since 2008, an individual's maximum SSI/SSP grant would be \$1,419 in 2023, or nearly 117% of the federal poverty line. Instead, the maximum grant for an individual in 2024 is about \$1,183, or 94% of the federal poverty line.

We must work to undo the harm caused during the Great Recession. Low-income individuals are rent-burdened, and 1 in 5 Californians continue to struggle with food insecurity. The end of pandemic assistance programs like the CalFresh Emergency Allotments exacerbates these challenges.

*"I recently relocated to be closer to family and the land where my departed husband is buried. I'm wheelchair-bound, and my SSI benefits are lower than they were in Hawaii because California hasn't increased the Cost Of Living Adjustment. I may have dug my own grave by moving here."* —Kathy, Eureka,

CA

State COLAs would ensure that rising inflation does not erode the real value of the SSP portion of the grant, but the state has rarely provided a COLA in the years since the recession. We must ensure that grants regain the purchasing power they have lost over the years.

**Reinstate and re-fund WIC 12550, the Special Circumstances Program, to support SSI/SSP and other public benefit recipients.**

Special circumstances include but are not limited to the purchase, repair, and replacement of essential household furniture, equipment, or clothing, necessary moving expenses, required housing repairs, and unmet shelter needs, up to \$2,500 annually per participant request, subject to limits set by the department.

Previously, the State had a program called Special Circumstances for SSI, IHSS, and CAPI recipients. The program existed from 1973 to 1992, then was discontinued, then revived in 1998 for approximately two years. We request to reinstate and re-fund WIC 12550 to provide Special Circumstances for SSI/SSP recipients. This program would support individuals with staying housed and safe daily and during natural disasters. Special circumstances include but are not limited to, the purchase, repair, and replacement of essential household furniture, equipment, or clothing, necessary moving expenses, required housing repairs, air conditioning, and unmet shelter needs, subject to limits set by the department.

## Looking Ahead

Beyond honoring the dignity of seniors and people with disabilities, investing in the SSP delivers critical stimulus through the multiplier effect, boosting the California economy. Every \$10 million in increased State Supplementary Payments would support \$15 million in economic output (multiplier of 1.50), 93 jobs, and \$0.9 million in state and local tax revenue.

The CA4SSI Coalition remains committed to ensuring that SSI/SSP recipients do not struggle with the toxic stress of poverty but instead can live their lives with dignity, peace of mind, and economic security. We look forward to working with you on this vision in the 2024-2025 Budget year.

Sincerely,  
Californians for SSI

CC:

Ann Patterson, Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Christy Bouma, Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Richard Figueroa, Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Kim McCoy Wade, Senior Advisor on Aging, Disability, and Alzheimer's, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Joe Stephenshaw, Director, Department of Finance

Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, California Health & Human Services Agency

Kim Johnson, Director, California Department of Social Services

Susan DeMarois, Director, California Department of Aging

Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins

Senate President Pro Tempore Designee Mike McGuire

Senate Budget Chair Nancy Skinner

Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 Chair Caroline Menjivar

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas

Assembly Budget Chair Jesse Gabriel

Assembly Budget Subcommittee #2 Chair Corey Jackson

Ginni Bella Navarre & Juwan Trotter, Legislative Analyst's Office

Eileen Cubanski, Executive Director, County Welfare Directors Association of California

**CA4SSI Statewide Organizational Endorsers:**

AARP, ACLU California, AllCare Alliance, The ARC CA, California Association of Food Banks, California Alliance for Retired Americans, California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS, California Church IMPACT, California Council of the Blind, California Emergency Foodlink, California Food Policy Advocates, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, California IHSS Consumer Alliance, California Partnership, California Senior Legislature, Californians for Disability Rights, CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Community Services Unlimited Inc., County Welfare Directors Association of CA, Courage Campaign, Disability Rights California, Educate Advocate, Food Chain Workers Alliance, GRACE/End Child Poverty CA, Housing California, IHSS Consumers Union, Insight Center, Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, Justice in Aging, Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California, Magnolia Women's Recovery Center, Meals on Wheels California, National Association of Social Workers/CA Chapter, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Produce Good, SEIU, UDW/AFSCME Local 3930, Western Center on Law and Poverty

**Bay Area**

ABD Productions, AIDS Housing Alliance/SF, Alameda County Commission on Aging, Alameda County Community Food Bank, Ala Costa Centers, Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council, Alameda County Homeless Action Center, Allen Temple Arms, All Home, All Saints Episcopal Church, Asian Law Alliance, Bay Area Community Services, Berkeley Food Pantry, Berkeley Food Policy Council, Bethel Community Presbyterian Church, CANV Food Bank, Center for the Vulnerable Child, Central City SRO Collaborative, City of Oakland Human Services Department, Choice in Aging, Community Action Alliance / Agnes Memorial Church, Community Action Marin, Community Action of Napa Valley Food Bank, Community Resources for Independent Living, CSI Support & Development, Disability Services & Legal Center, Downs Memorial United Methodist Church, East Bay Food Justice Project, Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa, Family Emergency Shelter Coalition, Food 2 Go, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Harbor House Ministries, Hayward Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hazon Bay Area, Hope 4 the Heart, Independent Living Resources of Solano and Contra Costa Counties, Jewish Family & Children's Services of the East Bay, L.A. Kitchen, Lake Merritt United Methodist Church Food Pantry, Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County, LIFT – Levantate, LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Los Robles Apartments, Marin Aging Action Initiative, Marin Asian Advocacy Project, Marin Food Policy Council, Meals on Wheels of Alameda County, Meals on Wheels of San Francisco, Mercy Brown Bag Program, Mission for the Homeless, Multi-Faith Action Coalition of Contra Costa, Oakland Food Pantry, Parkside Community Church, Oakland Mayor's Commission on Aging, Redwood Empire Food Bank, San Francisco Food Security Task Force, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, Second Harvest Santa Cruz, Senior & Disability Action, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County, Seventh Step Foundation, SF-Marin Food Bank, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul-San Leandro Conference, South Hayward Parish, St. Anthony Foundation, St. Francis Living Room, St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish, St. Mary's Center, Street Level Health Project, Tenderloin Housing Clinic, The Gubbio Project, The Neighborhood Village, The R.E.F.U.G.E, Tri-City Volunteers, United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County, Whistlestop

**Central Valley**

Central California Food Bank, Community Action Partnership of Kern County, Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living, FoodLink for Tulare County, Fresno Economic Opportunities Commission, Kern County Independent Living Center, Neighborhood Industries, Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin & Stanislaus Counties

**Los Angeles / Southern California**

ACLU of Southern California, Adams Vermont/Gardena CFMS, Center for Health Care Rights, Clergy Caucus of Inland Congregations United for Change, Communities Actively Living Independent & Free, Community Action Agency, Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino, Dayle McIntosh Center, Educate. Advocate., Disabled Resources Center, Inc., Downtown Women's Center, Fair Trade LA, Feeding America Riverside-San Bernardino Counties, FIND Food Bank, Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, Food & Water Watch, Friends Across The Line, Friends In Deed, Guerrilla Food Not Bombs, Homeless Action Center, Homeless Health Care Los Angeles, Hunger Action LA, Huntington Hospital Senior Care Network, Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Jewish Labor Committee Western Region, John Tennant Memorial- Episcopal Senior Communities, Latino Diabetes Association, Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley, Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition, Los Angeles Community Action Network, Los Angeles for a New Economy, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Orange County Food Access Coalition, MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles, Orange County Food Bank, Orange County Hunger Coalition, Personal Assistance Services Council of LA County, Project Angel Food, Prototypes, Retirement Housing Foundation, Santa Barbara Food Alliance, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, SEIU Local 721, Service Center for Independent Life, Social Justice Learning Institute, Southern CA Resource Services for Independent Living, Starting Over, Inc., St. Barnabas Senior Services, Thai Community Development Center, The East Los Angeles Community Union, Time for Change Foundation, Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, VELA, Veterans For Peace Los Angeles, Westside Center for Independent Living, WORKS (Women Organizing Resources, Knowledge & Services), Youth Justice Coalition

**Sacramento/Northern California**

2-1-1 Humboldt, Area 1 Agency on Aging, California Emergency Foodlink, Capitol People First, Cottage Housing Inc., DOGFITE (Disability Organizing Group for Initiating Total Equality), Food for People, Inc., Ford Street Project, Life Support Alliance, Humboldt Area Center for Harm Reduction, Mary Immaculate Residential Facility, Mendocino Food & Nutrition Program, Parkside Community Church, Placer Food Bank, Placer Independent Resource Services, River City Food Bank, Sacramento Housing Alliance, Resources for Independent Living-Sacramento, Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, The Resource Connection Food Bank, Yolo County Commission on Aging and Adult Services, Yolo Food Bank, Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, Yuba-Sutter Gleaners Food Bank Inc.

**San Diego**

Access to Independence, A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing), Community Resource Center, Feeding San Diego, Hunger Advocacy Network, IHSS Network San Diego, Imperial Valley Food Bank, Jewish Family Service of San Diego