

The House Moves a Step Closer to Decision- Will the 2018 Federal Budget Support Aging Services?

In May the Trump Administration released a detailed proposal for the 2018 Federal Budget. Across the board, the proposal would cut and eliminate programs that make up the fabric of aging services and are lifelines for many older Americans. It set the stage for congress to develop its own budget, which needs to be passed by September 30.

In July the House Appropriations Committee released a 2018 Labor-HHS Budget Bill and the House Budget Committee released a 2018 Budget Resolution. Together, the proposals cut many federal workforce, education, health and support programs that older Americans rely on.

While the budget bills still must pass the full House of Representatives and then the Senate, congress has a poor track record when it comes to championing the needs of older Americans, so we are deeply concerned about the future of aging services.

Here is a summary of the current House proposals:

Medicaid and Medicare The House bill proposes to cut \$500 billion from Medicare and \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid over the next decade, much deeper even than the President's proposal. The cuts to Medicaid would slash the program nearly in half over the next decade. Nearly 7 million low-income older Americans rely on Medicaid for their health and long-term care.

- In Alameda County, 47,400 people age 65+ rely on Medi-Cal coverage. Medi-Cal pays for In-Home Supportive Services to care for over 21,000 elders, children and adults with disabilities. It covers Adult Day Health Care for over 1,000 people with complex medical needs, and 380 case management slots for elders eligible for skilled nursing who want to live at home.

Social Security The President proposed slashing Social Security by over \$72 billion by reducing benefits provided through Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and cutting the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. While the House Appropriations' bill includes only the cuts to SSDI, SSI is still vulnerable. These cuts would threaten the survival of low-income seniors who depend on SSDI and SSI to pay for housing, food, and other essentials.

- About 54,000 seniors and people with disabilities rely on SSI. The 2017 maximum grant level for an individual in California is \$895 a month, about 10% less than the poverty level.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (CalFresh in California) The President proposed cutting SNAP funding by 25% over 10 years and scrapping policies that streamline access for seniors and people with disabilities. The House proposes even deeper cuts. Almost 5 million Older Americans rely on SNAP benefits to afford food.

- The Alameda County Community Food Bank, which helped 4,438 people apply for CalFresh in 2016, reports that the number of older adults seeing food assistance is growing.

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) The President proposed to eliminate the nation's only job training and placement program specifically for older adults. The House bill cuts the program by 25% and moves it from Labor to the Administration on Community

Living. Last year under SCSEP, 70,000 older people received on-the-job training while providing nearly 36 million hours of staff support to 30,000 organizations.

State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP, known as HICAP in California) The President proposed to eliminate funding for SHIP, and the House bill does exactly that with a cut of \$47 million. Each year SHIPs support 15,000+ counselors who provide free, state-specific assistance to over 6 million people.

- In Alameda County, HICAP is provided by Legal Assistance for Seniors, and helps thousands of people navigate the complexities of Medicare, many of them referred to HICAP by the Medicare 800 help line.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) The President would eliminate this program that helps low-income individuals pay for their heating and cooling costs, but the House proposes to maintain the current funding at \$3.39 billion. About a third of the 6.8 million households receiving LIHEAP benefits include an older adult aged 60+.

- In Alameda County, over 6,000 older adults and families with children received help with high utility bills last year.

Block Grants The House bill largely rejects the President's elimination of federal block grants that support work in local communities to improve economic security and independence for low-income families and seniors. The bill level-funds the Community Development Block Grant and Social Services Block Grant, but cuts the Community Services Block Grant by \$115 million (16%).

Senior Corps & AmeriCorps The President proposes to eliminate both of these national service programs that enlist older people in volunteerism and serve seniors in communities nationwide. The House bill rejected this, and proposes to retain current funding levels.

CDC Falls Prevention The President proposes to eliminate the Center for Disease Control's Falls Prevention program – a loss of \$2 million – while retaining the \$5 million in falls prevention funding in the Administration for Community Living. The House bill would level-fund the ACL program. Every 11 seconds an older adult is treated in an emergency room for a fall-related injury.

Chronic Disease Self-Management Education The President would cut federal funding for chronic disease self-management training from \$8 million to \$5 million, and the House bill does so, a cut of 38%. Two-thirds of older Americans have two or more chronic diseases.

Older Americans Act Programs The House bill rejects the President's cuts and maintains funding levels for Supportive Services (case management, friendly visiting, adult day care, and other essential services), Congregate Nutrition, Meals On Wheels, and Family Caregiver Support.

- In Alameda County, these Older Americans Act services, together with HICAP and SCSEP serve over 65,000 older people.

Elder Justice Act The House bill level funds the Long-Term Care Ombudsman and Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect program. But it rolls back a \$2 million increase achieved last year for Elder Rights Support Activities and the Elder Justice Initiative, cutting funding for efforts to develop a national Adult Protective Services data system and to continue elder abuse research.