

OLDER ADULTS NEED MORE THAN HEALTHCARE TO STAY HEALTHY

Senior Services Coalition
of Alameda County

April 6, 2017

Alameda County Seniors Take Action

The Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County is a coalition of 40 nonprofit and public organizations that provide health care and supportive services to over 65,000 seniors. We are committed to establishing an easily accessible, coordinated system of social, medical and supportive care for seniors in Alameda County.

In May, older adults across Alameda County will be gearing up to make their voices heard in protest of the President's budget which eliminates great swaths of core safety net programs. As a part of Older Americans Month, seniors will be attending rallies, writing letters and organizing.

"The federal funding that helps sustain the aging services ecosystem in California is at great risk," says Wendy Peterson, Director of the Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County.

In March, President Trump released a "skinny" federal budget proposal. While broad brush in many respects, it proposes specific cuts to key funding streams that sustain the aging services ecosystem – among them the elimination of Community Development Block Grants that many communities rely on to help fund meals on wheels and other lifeline programs. Also singled out for elimination is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program that helps low-income seniors who can't pay their utility bills, and the Senior Community Employment Program that helps older workers get back on the path to financial stability.

Economic insecurity is the single most significant threat to the stability of low and moderate income older adults in our community today. 47% of Californians age 65+ do not have enough income to meet their most basic needs. Solutions that improve access to food, housing, healthcare, cash assistance and community-based supportive services have powerful positive impacts on seniors' economic security.

The skinny budget does not provide any information on the administration's intent to cut (or spare) Older American's Act programs and other services that help older adults navigate the challenges of aging. However, deep cuts are proposed for Health and Human Services and to other departments where these services reside.

"The prospect of cuts to aging services is all the more terrible when we remember that federal funding has been under great constraint for over a decade, thanks to the 2013 Sequestration deal," says Peterson. Funding for many programs is less now than it was in 2010 – completely inadequate to address current needs and an aging population that is growing at breakneck speed.

A detailed federal budget proposal will be released later this Spring. Cities, counties, states and communities need to think hard about this new administration's budget proposal, and whether we will accept it. None of us can afford to lose the aging services infrastructure that we have today.