

Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

February 28, 2018

The Honorable Dr. Richard Pan
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814
via fax: (916) 668-7004

Dear Dr. Pan:

RE: Adult Protective Services Program (APS) Home Safe: Homelessness Prevention for Vulnerable Seniors

The Senior Services Coalition represents over 40 organizations that provide health and supportive services to over 65,000 seniors in Alameda County. We are writing to respectfully request your support to provide \$15 million State General Fund on a one-time basis to establish Home Safe, to establish Home Safe, a homelessness prevention demonstration grant program for victims of elder abuse and neglect served by county-run Adult Protective Services (APS). The proposed one-time investment would allow participating counties to demonstrate over three years how providing short-term housing crisis intervention services can help APS victims recover, rebuild, and find safety in their own homes after experiencing abuse and neglect.

Victims of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect are at unique risk of becoming homeless. For example, new research shows that nearly half of the homeless adults over age 50 in Oakland are experiencing homelessness for the first time. These adults typically led “conventional” lives until a crisis led them directly to homelessness – a crisis such as being financially exploited by a scam artist or family member, or by being left unable to care for themselves after the death of a spouse or caregiver. These destabilizing events that lead to homelessness are some of the 150,000 instances of elder and dependent abuse and neglect that get reported to APS each year.

The consequences of homelessness among older adults are dire and costly. Research shows homeless adults are at higher risk of chronic health problems—such as diabetes, lung disease, and cognitive impairment—and are likely to die decades earlier than those who are housed. For many victims, the health hardships of homelessness exacerbate the physical and emotional wounds of abuse and neglect, leading to expensive emergency room visits and accelerated entry into nursing home care.

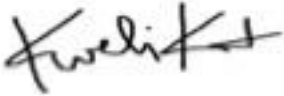
With limited affordable housing options for seniors and people with disabilities, a prevention focus is called for. A one-time \$15 million General Fund investment in Home Safe would allow roughly 15 participating counties or groups of counties to demonstrate over three years how providing short-term housing crisis intervention can help reduce the risk of homelessness and future incidents of elder abuse and neglect among California’s older adults. Home Safe would build on existing best practices to prevent eviction and stabilize housing by leveraging and providing linkages to services including short-term rental and utility assistance, heavy cleaning, immediate mental health treatment, and intensive case management to ensure clients can maintain their homes. By providing targeted assistance to prevent homelessness, Home Safe has the potential to produce benefits to the state that far outweigh the cost. An increasing body of research shows that

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prevention pays. A 2016 article published in the journal *Science*, for example, showed that providing just \$1,000 in short-term financial assistance for those at highest risk of losing their homes saved taxpayers more than \$10,000 in avoided health and social services costs.

Home Safe is a critical step towards ending homelessness among victims of elder abuse and neglect. For this reason, the Senior Services Coalition supports this request for a one-time funding augmentation to the APS program.

Sincerely,



Kweli Kitwana
Associate Director of Policy & Advocacy
Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County

CC: Senator Nancy Skinner
Senator Bob Weickowski
Carrie Freitag, CWDA