

# Services Coalition of Alameda County

AGING IS SOMETHING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON

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January 13, 2020

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez  
Chair, Assembly Appropriations Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

## Re: Support for AB 683 (Carrillo)

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez,

The Senior Services Coalition and our 40 member organizations support AB 683 (Carrillo) to increase the assets limits for Medi-Cal programs serving seniors and persons with disabilities, which will increase access to Medi-Cal and to financial stability which is crucial given our housing and homelessness crisis.

Currently, an older person applying for or enrolled in the Aged & Disabled Medi-Cal program, is restricted to \$2,000 in a bank account and a couple to \$3,000. That asset limit prevents older people from having adequate resources to weather a crisis, such as an eviction, a leaking roof, or a major vehicle repair.

Our coalition's member organizations serve over 79,000 older people in Alameda County, and we see every day the consequences of this outdated and unjust limitation. When faced with the decision of qualifying for Medi-Cal or having additional savings, many seniors try to avoid spending down their savings and so miss out on much needed medical and long term care. When seniors are enrolled in Medi-Cal, the asset limit puts them at risk of further instability or homelessness when financial crises happen. These rules disproportionately punish seniors of color because they are more likely to have cash savings, instead of an exempt home.

AB 683 makes three important changes to the Medi-Cal asset rules: (1) it will update the assets limits for programs serving seniors and persons with disabilities to \$10,000 for an individual and an additional \$5,000 for each additional household member, with annual indexing; (2) it will expand and simplify the list of items to be excluded from the assets test for those Medi-Cal programs still subject to the assets test; and (3) it will eliminate the assets test entirely for the Medicare Savings Programs, programs where Medi-Cal pays for an individual's Medicare premiums and co-payments.

We understand that the cost to raise the assets level now is significant because we have not adjusted this limit in over 30 years. Cost of living has increased considerably since 1989 and \$2,000 is no longer enough savings to ensure that someone will not end up on the street if they have to find a new place to live. Helping seniors and persons with disabilities save for financial crises is a wise investment, particularly given the rise in homelessness among seniors.

We respectfully ask for your leadership and support of this important legislation to provide equity and stability for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities who are subject to the assets test.

Sincerely,



Wendy Peterson, Director