

Assembly Bill 2302

Elder and Dependent Adults

Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula

As Introduced February 14, 2020

SUMMARY

AB 2302 aims to expand and enhance services for older and dependent adults in California by increasing counties' capacity to provide case management and services and building upon the successful Home Safe program to help Adult Protective Services (APS) clients who need help with housing issues.

ISSUE

APS plays a critical role in protecting older and dependent adults in California from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Law enforcement and the public increasingly rely on APS to address the complex needs of older adults, including those experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. For many victims, APS social workers can provide only limited, short-term services. More could be done with additional funds to reduce caseloads and bring more services to bear.

BACKGROUND

APS was established in 1998 (AB 2199, Chapter 946). APS serves individuals over 65 and dependent adults ages 18-64 who are unable to meet their own needs or are victims of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by others. The APS program responded to 190,715 reports of abuse in 2017-2018, a 131 percent increase in reports since 2000-01.

The population that APS serves has grown and changed significantly and will continue to do so. By 2030, one in five Californians will be age 65 or older. The number of older adults in California with disabilities will increase from 1 million in 2015 to nearly 3 million in 2060.

California's aging population is also an increasingly homeless population. Approximately 50 percent of homeless individuals are over age 50, and half of those became homeless after age 50.

APS programs are largely supported by state funds, as there is no federal funding source. County APS programs struggle to keep pace with the growth in reports to APS and are understaffed and under-resourced to serve those who require more intensive case management to remain safe from abuse.

Given the dramatic demographic changes and the expanding needs within this population, as well as the need to serve individuals before they reach a crisis point, it is imperative to improve the APS system to keep older and disabled adults who are experiencing abuse, neglect, and exploitation safe and housed.

THIS BILL

AB 2302 will expand APS staffing to provide long-term case management, including for those who are homeless and have cognitive impairments.

The bill also builds on the Home Safe Program, which provides short-term housing assistance to prevent homelessness among APS clients. AB 2302 expands Home Safe to additional counties, authorizes long-term subsidies, and bridges housing subsidies and provides greater flexibility in the use of funds to support the transition back to a home or community-based setting.

AB 2302 allows APS to serve highly vulnerable adults aged 60 or older. Currently, APS serves

adults 65 years of age and older or dependent adults. Serving those 60 years of age or older will align the APS program with service eligibility for programs administered under the Older Americans Act, such as Meals on Wheels, which can be important buffers in preventing social isolation that leads to abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Finally, AB 2302 will establish the Adult Protective Services FAST (Financial Abuse Specialist Teams)/Forensic Center Grant Program, which will award grants to counties to create, enhance, and maintain a FAST or forensic center. FASTs and forensic centers allow for a collaborative and targeted, rapid-response approach to complex cases.

SUPPORT

County Welfare Directors Association of California (Sponsor)

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