



January 29, 2018

To: The Honorable Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director

RE: ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES – HOME SAFE

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), California Elder Justice Coalition, and California Commission on Aging, respectfully request your support to provide \$15 million General Fund in 2018-19 to establish Home Safe, a homelessness prevention demonstration grant program for victims of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect. This proposed one-time augmentation would allow approximately 15 participating county Adult Protective Services (APS) programs to demonstrate over three years how providing short-term housing crisis intervention can help reduce the incidence and risk of homelessness among California's older and dependent adults. We are excited about the championship of Home Safe by the Assembly Aging and Long-Term Care Committee Chair, the Honorable Assemblymember Ash Kalra, and are seeking your support in the Assembly Budget Committee.

Victims of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect are at unique risk of becoming homeless. New research shows that nearly half of the homeless older 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 being left unable to care for themselves after the death of a spouse or caregiver. When APS receives a report of such crises, social workers investigate those claims and create a plan to help the individual stabilize and recover. But, county social workers are finding that they are to provide the assistance necessary to help victims of abuse maintain their homes as they recover. With \$126 million in funding, APS investigates 150,000 referrals and provides short-term services to 25,000 clients each year. In contrast, the child welfare system serves a population 4 times larger than APS, but receives 40 times the funding – \$5 billion a year. Unlike child welfare, APS simply does not have the resources to provide a more in-depth intervention, especially during a housing crisis.

A one-time \$15 million General Fund investment to establish Home Safe would allow participating county APS programs to demonstrate over three years how intervening at the moment of crisis can prevent homelessness among victims of abuse and neglect. Home Safe

counties would identify clients at risk of losing their homes and provide services including short-term rental and utility assistance, heavy cleaning, immediate mental health treatment, and intensive case management to ensure clients are able to maintain their homes. Home Safe builds on the best practices and evidence-based principles of homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing supported by the Legislature in recent years. Proven to be cost-effective and have better outcomes than many other housing models, these approaches prioritize intervening at the moment of crisis, maintaining individuals in permanent housing, providing short-term supports, and maximizing community-based resources to bolster housing stability. Since APS already works with individuals in moments of crisis, the program is in a unique position to target assistance to those most likely to become homeless at the moment they need it most.

As a three-year demonstration grant program, the one-time \$15 million General Fund investment in Home Safe would include an evaluation component to evaluate the effectiveness of Home Safe at: reducing the risk of homelessness, preventing future incidents of elder abuse and neglect among California's older adults, and saving taxpayer dollars in the long run. A recent study demonstrated that providing modest financial assistance (about \$1,000) to families most at risk of homelessness reduced their likelihood of becoming homeless within six months by 76 percent. These small investments lead to averted costs – and taxpayer savings – of well over \$10,000 per person by reducing shelter costs, emergency room visits, and law enforcement calls. The health hardship of homelessness makes older homeless adults likely to die nearly 30 years earlier than similarly-situated adults who have housing. By evaluating Home Safe, we will be able to test what the research strongly suggests: that preventing victims of elder and dependent abuse and neglect from becoming homeless will not only save tax payer dollars – it will save lives.

For these reasons, we urge your support for a one-time augmentation of \$15 million General Fund to help victims of elder abuse and neglect remain safely in their own homes.

cc: Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Jason Sisney, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Cyndi Hillery, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Frank Prewoznik, Assembly Republican Fiscal Office
Marla Cowen, Office of Assembly Member Joaquin Arambula
Mark Newton, Legislative Analyst's Office
Ginni Bella Navarre, Legislative Analyst's Office
Michelle Baass, Health and Human Services Agency
Marko Mijic, Health and Human Services Agency
Will Lightbourne, Department of Social Services
Robert Smith, Department of Social Services
Kären Dickerson, California Department of Social Services
Kristin Shelton, HHS, Department of Finance
Jay Kapoor, HHS, Department of Finance
Justin Garrett, California Association of Counties
County Caucus