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California Commission on Aging
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March 4, 2015

To: The Honorable Tony Thurmond, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

Honorable Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1

From: Frank J. Mecca, Executive Director, CWDA
Sandi Fitzpatrick, Director, California Commission on Aging
Lisa Nerenberg, California Elder Justice Coalition

RE: Adult Protective Services: \$5 million for Training and Program Support

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA), California Elder Justice Coalition and California Commission on Aging respectfully request your consideration and support of a budget item to increase statewide capacity in the Adult Protective Services (APS) program to protect and serve seniors and dependent adults who are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Specifically, we request your consideration to provide additional resources for a statewide training system for APS staff, and to codify a staffing position established in the 2014-15 State Budget under the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to provide leadership and support to county APS programs.

California's APS programs provide 24/7 emergency response to reports of abuse and neglect of elders and dependent adults. APS social workers deliver critical, often life-saving, services in a variety of abuse and neglect situations, including financial abuse. These social workers conduct in-person investigations on complex cases, often in coordination with local law enforcement, and leverage other system supports on behalf of victims including legal aid programs, the judiciary, long-term care services, and many others. APS social workers must be adept at helping victims and their families to navigate other systems such as conservatorships and to local aging programs for needed in-home services. Their efforts often enable elders and dependent adults to remain safely in their homes and communities, thus avoiding costly institutional placement into nursing homes.

The APS program was primarily a state-funded program until 2011, when the program was realigned and counties now have the 100 percent fiscal responsibility for the program. However, CDSS retained program oversight and regulatory and policy making responsibilities for the program. This included responsibility for funding and supporting the statewide training of APS workers in order to ensure consistency. Unfortunately, the statewide training program is underfunded and woefully inadequate to meet the current and future needs of APS programs. Currently, only \$88,000 (General Fund) is allocated to CDSS to support statewide training. This funding has not been increased for the past ten years, despite the fact that APS cases statewide have risen by 35 percent between 2001 and 2013.

Nationally, the passage of the Elder Justice Act calls for the creation of a structure for administering national and state elder justice programs. California's over age 65 population is projected to grow significantly, increasing from 4.2 million in 2010 to more than 6 million by 2020 and will double to 8.4 million by 2030. The oldest demographic, those 85 and older, will grow by 143 percent between 1990 and 2020 and will continue to increase through 2030.

State leadership, and partnership with the counties and broader elder justice network, is needed to ensure that APS programs can rise to this challenge and effectively and consistently serve this population. To meet these increasing demands, there is a tremendous need for leadership within CDSS to work with federal, state and county agencies and other stakeholders to promote coordination, quality assurance, and best practices in APS. The Legislature and Governor acknowledged this need in the 2014-15 State Budget by appropriating funding for a staffing position under CDSS. We request that the Legislature codify the responsibilities for this staff person, to include engagement with county APS and other elder and dependent adult justice stakeholders to develop policies and guidelines that support local APS programs in meeting existing mandates, respond to opportunities to build APS infrastructure and expand resources, and promote optimal outcomes for seniors and dependent adults.

A well-trained workforce is pivotal to timely and appropriate response. For these reasons, we urge your support for \$5 million to build a strong training infrastructure and to memorialize state leadership for the APS program within CDSS to work in partnership with elder justice stakeholders to promote an effective and responsive APS system.

We thank you for your consideration of this proposal to invest in the State's infrastructure to build capacity in the elder and dependent adult justice system.

Attachment: APS Fact Sheet

cc: Gail Gronert, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Chris Woods, Office of the Assembly Speaker
Nicole Vazquez, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 1
Julie Souliere, Assembly Republican Fiscal Consultant
Michael Wilkening, Health and Human Services Agency
Jay Kapoor, Department of Finance
Matt Paulin, Department of Finance
Mark Newton, Legislative Analyst's Office
Rashi Kesarwani, Legislative Analyst's Office
Will Lightbourne, Director, Department of Social Services
Patricia Huston, Legislative Affairs, Department of Social Services
Farrah McDaid-Ting, California State Association of Counties
County Caucus