

Questions for Governor Candidates at Local Events

Background:

We need a vision for universally affordable and accessible long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities in California. Our state is not prepared to meet the needs of an aging population and we want to elect a leader with a plan for supporting Californians who need and desire home and community based options where they live.

This is an unprecedented time. California's older adult population is projected to increase by two-thirds to almost 9.1 million in 2030—this is more than 20 times the growth projected for residents under age 65. As the population of older adults increases, with it grows the need for services to support disability and dementia or cognitive impairment. The already stressed system will be pushed beyond the breaking point. To ensure that seniors and people with disabilities can live with dignity, California needs a comprehensive policy and financing framework.

QUESTION 1

Universal Long Term Care/ Universal Long Term Supports and Services.

Over the next ten years, the annual cost of long-term care/long term supports and services in California will rise by almost \$20,000 per person. And the need for long-term care is growing. Contrary to popular belief, Medicare does not cover most long-term care, and Medicaid only covers services for the medically fragile, in need of daily nursing assistance. Medicaid requires families to “spend down” their assets to achieve eligibility. Middle class families must become poor in order to access care. In addition to those challenges, a very small portion of the population has private long term care insurance and the current federal administration is threatening massive cuts to Medicaid. A universal long term care effort in CA would ensure that all Californians are able to access the care they need, in their homes and communities as they age. Will you commit to supporting the creation of universal long-term care in California? How will you finance it?

QUESTION 2:

Affordability.

Will you as the next Governor commit to making home and community based care more affordable to middle class families who today are forced to spend down to poverty level to access Medicaid funded home and community based care or who often give up their own income, giving up their jobs or cutting back on hours, to provide the care themselves?

QUESTION 3:

Medicaid Block-granting and Honoring Olmstead.

If Congress turns Medicaid into a block grant program or approves a budget that cuts Medicaid, seniors and people with disabilities will face significant funding threats to the services they rely on. This will undermine the promise of the Supreme Court Olmstead Decision which affirms the right to age in place, in our homes and communities, in the least restrictive environment, rather than in a nursing home or other costly institution. As Governor, will you commit to upholding Olmstead and protecting existing Home and Community Based Services programs supported by Medicaid from any cuts or reductions? And if Medicaid block-granting does occur in California, will you commit to find the funding for these necessary services including raising revenue from those who can afford to pay?

QUESTION 4:

Supporting Family Caregivers.

California has an estimated 4.4 million family caregivers who serve as the unpaid backbone of our fragmented Long Term Care system. While baby boomers account for approximately 35% of California's unpaid family caregivers, millennials are assuming a greater role with 39% caring for a parent, grandparent or a child. And women do most of this unpaid caregiving. Family caregivers often struggle to balance work obligations with family caregiving needs- facing job loss or the reduction of hours that make it harder to save and plan for their own future.

80% of long-term care in California is provided by unpaid family members. The financial and emotional stress on caregivers is significant. Will you commit to support family caregivers, many of whom are juggling child care and elder care, through the creation of a universal long term care benefit that will give them access to paid caregivers?

QUESTION 5:

Worker Shortage & Creating Great Jobs.

California will need 500,000 additional health care workers by 2020 to meet the growing need. This worker shortfall is the result of inadequate pay and benefits, barriers to immigrant workers from entering the workforce, and the rapidly growing aging population in the state. Will you commit to address this workforce shortage and make providing long term care in community based settings a profession that attracts and retains a workforce needed to meet the demand?