



CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE FOR LONG-TERM SERVICES & SUPPORTS (CCLTSS)

March 15, 2019

Honorable Dr. Richard Pan, Chairman
Senate Budget Subcommittee #3
State Capitol, Room 5114
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-651-4906

Honorable Eloise Reyes, Acting Chairman
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1
State Capitol, Room, 2175
Sacramento, CA 95814
Fax: 916-319-2047

Re: \$5.2 Million Funding Request for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

Dear Senator Dr. Pan and Assemblymember Reyes,

The California Collaborative for Long Term Services and Supports is comprised of 39 statewide aging and disability organizations that promote dignity and independence in long-term living. Our members include advocates, providers, labor and health insurers and collectively we represent millions of California seniors and people with disabilities, their caregivers and those who provide health, human services and housing.

On behalf of California Collaborative for Long Term Services and Supports, we respectfully request your support to augment program funding through a \$5.2 million increase in General Funds for the Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

An adequately funded Ombudsman Program is a vital part of the state's long-term care safety net. When local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs are able to fulfill the State and Federal service mandates, not only do care facility residents benefit with higher quality of life and care, but also the State reduces costs for new complaints that would otherwise be referred directly to the licensing agencies. Truly this is an "ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" situation.

Through a combination of paid staff and well-trained certified volunteers, the Ombudsman organizations provide regular, unannounced in-person visits. These extra eyes and ears in facilities mean Ombudsman representatives can identify and resolve resident complaints quickly, in addition to ensuring that facilities are free from health and safety issues. This is especially important for the estimated 60% of skilled nursing residents who do not currently receive visits from friends or family.

A vital part of the unannounced facility visits is the availability of the Ombudsman to provide consultations to residents and family members on issues relating to long-term care. Last year local Ombudsman representatives provided over 66,000 consultations. The Ombudsman programs work to resolve complaints or problems of care in a non-adversarial process by working directly with facility administrators and care providers. In 2018 they identified, investigated and resolved over 39,000 complaints. Of these complaints investigated, residents reported a 73% satisfaction rating with the outcomes obtained by working with the LTC Ombudsman.

When situations are not resolved, the local program may refer complaints and help residents file complaints with various enforcement agencies. They also follow up on complaints and when necessary, report harmful situations to law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

Obtaining quality long-term care as an individual or on behalf of a friend or family member can be a complicated and often a frustrating experience. It is crucial to have knowledgeable LTC Ombudsman representatives available to educate and when necessary represent the resident on their behalf on issues relating to licensing regulations and best practice options.

Given the current and growing population of older adults, now is the time to invest in this proven program. A \$5.2 million investment means knowledgeable specially trained resident focused advocates making quarterly unannounced facility visits and sufficient program resources to whenever possible utilize staff Ombudsman rather than volunteers to conduct most elder abuse complaints.

I respectfully ask your support as the chairs of the Budget Subcommittee for Health and Human Services for this funding request to support the local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.

Sincerely



Amber Christ
Vice Chair for Policy
California Collaborative for Long Term Services & Supports

CC:

Tam Ma, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Honorable Toni Atkins, Senate President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
Honorable Anthony Rendon, California State Assembly Speaker
Honorable Holly J. Mitchell, Chair, Budget & Fiscal Review, California State Senate
Honorable Richard Pan, Chair, Sub 3 Health & Human Services, California State Senate
Honorable Phil Ting, Chair, Committee on Budget, California State Assembly
Honorable Eloise Reyes, Acting Chair, Sub 1 Health & Human Services, California State Assembly
Keely Bosler, Finance Director, California Department of Finance