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February 26, 2024

Honorable Caroline Menjivar, Chair
Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Sub. No. 3
1021 O Street, Suite 6720
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Corey Jackson, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
1021 O Street, Suite 6120
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: In Home Supportive Services: Administrative “Bridge” Funding – \$51 million
General Fund Request – SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Menjivar and Chair Jackson,

I am writing on behalf of the Kern County Board of Supervisors in lockstep with the County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) to address underfunding of social worker and related staffing costs in the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) Program. Specifically, the coalition is requesting that the State provide \$51 million General Fund in one-time “bridge” funding in the 2024-25 fiscal year, and associated budget trailer bill language requiring the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to work with CWDA and counties during the 2024-25 fiscal year to update the existing IHSS administration budget methodology to take effect in the 2025-26 fiscal year. This funding is necessary to ensure timely access to IHSS and to meet the growing demand of the program by older adults and persons with disabilities.

The IHSS Program is a critical program in achieving the goals and vision as outlined in California’s Master Plan for Aging. California’s population of older adults aged 65 and older is projected to reach 25 percent of the population, or 8.6 million Californians, by 2030. IHSS enables older adults to age with dignity and independence. As of December 2023, over 750,537 older adults and persons with disabilities receive in-home care from 599,176 trusted IHSS caregivers in California. Recently enacted expansions in Medi-Cal eligibility and the elimination of the Medi-Cal asset limit test, will allow more older adults and persons with disabilities to qualify for IHSS services to remain safely in their homes and community, avoiding costly hospitalization or institutionalization.

However, county human services agencies are not prepared for this influx of older adults into the IHSS Program due to inadequate funding of the program’s administrative operations. The IHSS Program relies on social workers to conduct assessments for older adults applying to the program to determine eligibility and level of need for in-home assistance. Once found eligible for services, IHSS staff assist consumers with identifying and enrolling their provider of choice to deliver personal care services. County IHSS staff ensure timely payments to those providers, and they

carry out many other administrative duties required under both state and federal laws and regulations.

The current funding gap for county IHSS staffing worsens each year as the population of IHSS consumers increases, due to population growth and new laws that broaden eligibility into the program. This gap is due to the State never fully funding actual IHSS worker costs when the budget methodology was updated in 2017-18; this underfunding has carried forward and has grown ever since because there are no cost adjustments provided. Additionally, the methodology does not pay for all the workload associated in processing applications, despite the need to complete assessments on a timely basis to determine if an older adult or person with disabilities is eligible to receive those services. This results in high caseloads for existing county IHSS staff, which in turn hampers counties' ability to adequately respond to the needs of recipients and providers, and to ensure IHSS applications are processed on a timely basis and that reassessments occur at least every 12 months, as required under state and federal law.

We believe it is critical to address this funding gap now to enable the IHSS Program to properly serve the growing population of older adults and persons with disabilities, enabling these Californians to live independently and to age with dignity as articulated in California's Aging Master Plan.

For these reasons, Kern County respectfully urges your support of this funding request.

Sincerely,



David Couch, Chairman
Kern County Board of Supervisors

cc: Members and Staff, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 3
Members and Staff, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 2
Honorable Members, Kern Legislative Delegation
County Welfare Directors Association
California State Association of Counties
Kern Aging and Adult Services
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