



The Honorable Edmund G.
Brown Jr.
Governor, State of
California
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Holly
Mitchell
Chair, Senate Budget and
Fiscal Review Committee
California State Senate
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget
Committee
California State Assembly
Sacramento, CA 95814

February 26, 2018

Re: Prioritizing SSI/SSP Investments in the 2018-19 Budget

Dear Governor Brown, Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting,

Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) represents more than 200 organizations that represent the nearly 1.3 million Californians who rely on the federal/state Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Payment (SSI/SSP) program and have experienced devastating cuts with severe consequences to themselves, non-profit service providers, and to our state. As you know, Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, is a federal safety net program that provides a very basic income to older adults and people with disabilities who have little-to-no other income or resources. With a rapidly aging population and rising income inequality, the nation's senior population is becoming larger and poorer. SSI is now more important than ever to people in every community around the country.

We ask the Legislature & Administration to support a \$100 a month budget increase to SSP grants that will bring the combined SSI/SSP grants to nearly 100 percent of the federal poverty level for single recipients. We also ask to re-establish the prior statutory cost of living adjustment (COLA), and urge the Subcommittees to take early action on this request.

We gratefully acknowledge the one-time 2.76 percent increase provided in the 2016-17 Budget agreement. That has been the [only investment since the Great Recession cuts](#), however, meaning that every other year SSI/SSP recipients have experienced an additional cut as grants lose their value to inflation, and even that action represented “the [smallest theoretical increase](#)” that could have been provided that year.

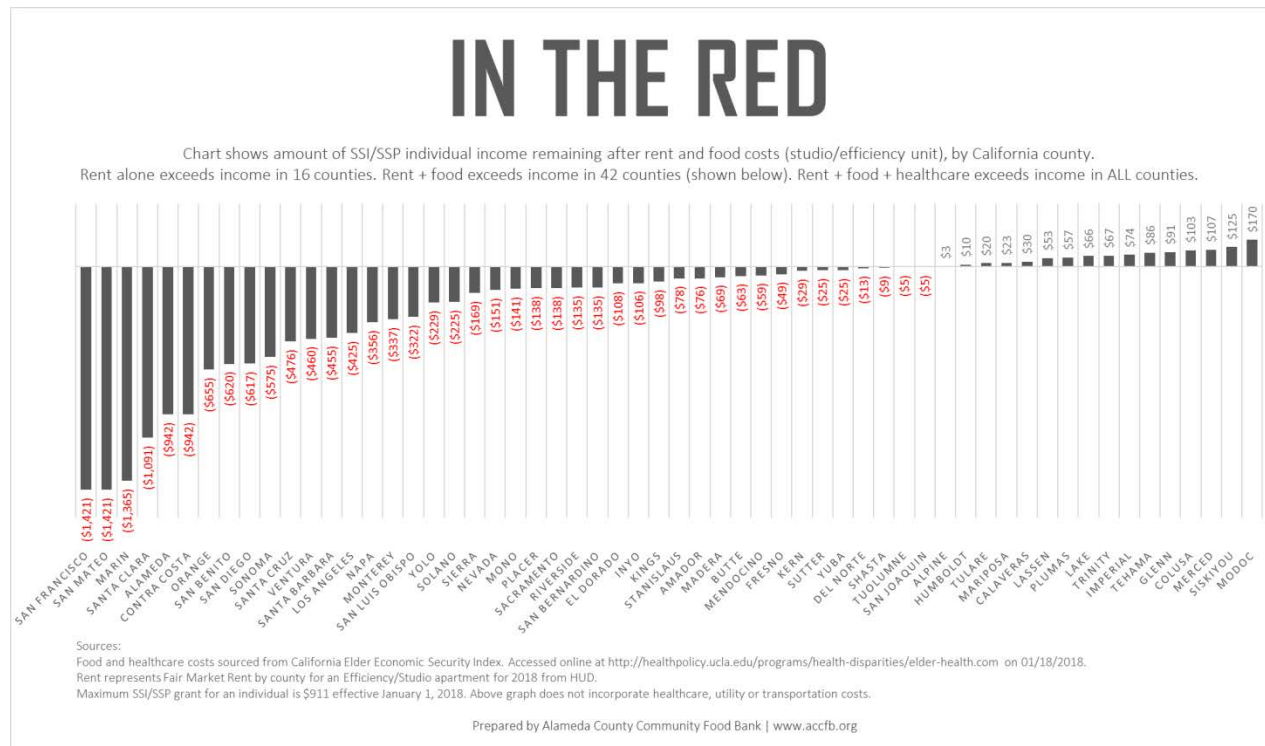
The state has made historic progress in reversing the Great Recession deficits, but this has come at the expense of maintaining rock-bottom SSI/SSP grants that are forcing hunger, homelessness and inhumane hardship on 1.3 million of our neighbors. [In fact, state spending is 40% lower than in 2007-08 despite a 2 percent caseload increase](#). Especially given the health of our reserves and revenues, there is simply no excuse not to make SSI/SSP a priority in the 2018-19 Budget.

The High Cost of Low SSP Grants for Recipients, Service Providers & our Governments

The grant cuts and the COLA repeal have pushed recipients into homelessness and hunger, and are a significant reason [why California has the highest Supplemental Poverty Measure of any state](#).

[In January 2009 the SSI/SSP grant of \\$907 per month](#) was worth 100.5 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) for a single individual. The maximum grant as of [January 1, 2018 is \\$910.72 per month](#), worth just [90 percent of the current monthly FPL of \\$1,011.67](#).

In fact, combined SSI/SSP grants are now [only \\$4 higher in nominal value than in 2009](#), trapping individuals on the program in poverty. Grants are so low that they only cover the cost of a studio apartment in 16 counties – and far less than that in counties as diverse as Los Angeles and San Benito. **Simply put, SSI/SSP recipients do not have sufficient funds to pay for housing, and many are forced into homelessness.** For those that can obtain below-market rent, grants are still insufficient to meet even basic needs for utilities, food, medicine, toiletries, clothing and other basic necessities that higher income Californians take for granted.



Given the near decade of sub-poverty grants, SSI/SSP recipients have increasingly relied on non-profit providers to survive because grants are insufficient to last the month. In the case of the emergency food network, many have seen their service to seniors double since the cuts. This increased need occurs on an essentially permanent basis as the next month's grant falls short and the cycle repeats itself. Providers across the human services sectors are over-capacity as they were built to meet short term gaps.

Finally, local and state governments are literally paying the price of below-poverty SSI/SSP grants. SSI/SSP recipients increasingly rely on expensive public safety, medical and nursing home services that would not be needed if grants covered basic needs. Research continues to document the public cost of services needed due to [homelessness](#) and [hunger](#). Research also shows that if provided increased grants, those funds would reduce need for these costly services and in fact would quickly circulate to support our local economies & tax receipts.

CA4SSI Requests: \$100 a Month Increase in SSP Grants & Restoration of the COLA

California is better than this. CA4SSI calls on all Budget stakeholders to provide a pathway to end poverty in SSI/SSP recipients.

The Coalition supports the policy structure offered in [AB 3200 \(Kalra\)](#) to increase SSP grants by \$100 a month and restore the Cost of Living Adjustment based on the California Necessities Index. A \$100 a month increase on January 1, 2019, together with the federal cost of living adjustment projected to be 2.6%, would lift SSI/SSP grants for individuals to \$1,028 a month, or 99 percent of the federal poverty level.

We ask the respective Budget Subcommittees on Health & Human Services to take early action to restore the Cost of Living Adjustment as a first step toward ending poverty in SSI/SSP in the 2018-19 Budget Act.

CA4SSI looks forward to working with the budget committees and the Administration to help every Californian move out of poverty and live with dignity.

Sincerely,

Californians for SSI

CC: Speaker of the Assembly Anthony Rendon
Senate Pro Tem Kevin De León
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 Chair Dr. Joaquin Arambula
Senate Budget Subcommittee #3 Chair Dr. Richard Pan
Amy Costa, Department of Finance
Will Lightbourne, Director of the California Department of Social Services
Ms. Donna Campbell, Secretary, Office of Governor Jerry Brown

CA4SSI Statewide Organizational Endorsers

AARP California, ACLU California, AllCare Alliance, The ARC CA, California Association of Food Banks, California Alliance for Retired Americans, California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS, California Church IMPACT, California Council of the Blind, California Emergency Foodlink, California Food Policy Advocates, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, California IHSS Consumer Alliance, California Partnership, California Senior Legislature, Californians for Disability Rights, CLUE: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, Community Services Unlimited Inc., County Welfare Directors Association of CA, Courage Campaign, Disability Rights California, Educate Advocate, Food Chain Workers Alliance, Housing California, IHSS Consumers Union, Insight Center, Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, Justice in Aging, Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California, Magnolia Women's Recovery Center, National Association of Social Workers/CA Chapter, National Center for Lesbian Rights, Produce Good, Redwood Empire Food Bank, Resources for Independent Living, SEIU, Service Center for Independent Life, UDW/AFSCME Local 3930, Western Center on Law & Poverty

Bay Area

ABD Productions, AIDS Housing Alliance/SF, Alameda County Commission on Aging, Alameda County Community Food Bank, Ala Costa Centers, Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council, Alameda County Homeless Action Center, Allen Temple Arms, All Saints Episcopal Church, Asian Law Alliance, Bay Area Community Services, Berkeley Food Pantry, Berkeley Food Policy Council, Bethel Community Presbyterian Church, CANV Food Bank, Center for the Vulnerable Child, Central City SRO Collaborative, City of Oakland Human Services Department, Choice in Aging, Community Action Alliance / Agnes Memorial Church, Community Action Marin, Community Action of Napa Valley Food Bank, Community Resources for Independent Living, CSI Support & Development, Disability Services & Legal Center, Downs Memorial United Methodist Church, East Bay Food Justice Project, Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa, Family Emergency Shelter Coalition, Food 2 Go, Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano, Harbor House Ministries, Hayward Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hazon Bay Area, Hope 4 the Heart, Independent Living Resources of Solano and Contra Costa Counties, Jewish Family & Children's Services of the East Bay, L.A. Kitchen, Lake Merritt United Methodist Church Food Pantry, Law Foundation of Silicon Valley, LIFT – Levantate, LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Los Robles Apartments, Marin Aging Action Initiative, Marin Asian Advocacy Project, Marin Food Policy Council, Meals on Wheels of Alameda County, Meals on Wheels of San Francisco, Mercy Brown Bag Program, Mission for the Homeless. Multi-Faith Action Coalition of Contra Costa, Oakland Food Pantry, Oakland Mayor's Commission on Aging, San Francisco Food Security Task Force, Satellite Affordable Housing Associates, Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, Second Harvest Santa Cruz, Senior & Disability Action, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County, Seventh Step Foundation, SF-Marin Food Bank, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, Silicon Valley Law Foundation, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul-San Leandro Conference, South Hayward Parish, St. Anthony Foundation, St. Francis Living Room, St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish, St. Mary's Center, Street Level Health Project, Tenderloin Housing Clinic, The Gubbio Project, The Neighborhood Village, The R.E.F.U.G.E, Tri-City Volunteers, United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County, Whistlestop

Central Valley

Community Action Partnership of Kern County, Community Food Bank, Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living, FoodLink for Tulare County, Fresno Metro Ministries, Kern County Independent Living Center, Second Harvest Food Bank of San Joaquin & Stanislaus Counties

Los Angeles / Southern California

ACLU of Southern California, Adams Vermont/Gardena CFMS, Center for Health Care Rights, Clergy Caucus of Inland Congregations United for Change, CLUE-LA, Communities Actively Living Independent & Free, Community Action Agency, Community Action Partnership of San Bernardino, Dayle McIntosh Center, Educate. Advocate., Disabled Resources Center, Inc., Downtown Women's Center, Fair Trade LA, Feeding America Riverside-San Bernardino Counties, FIND Food Bank, Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, Food & Water Watch, Friends Across The Line, Friends In Deed, Guerrilla Food Not Bombs, Homeless Action Center, Homeless Health Care Los Angeles, Hunger Action LA, Huntington Hospital Senior Care Network, Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Jewish Labor Committee Western Region, John Tennant Memorial-Episcopal Senior Communities, Latino Diabetes Association, Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley, Legal Aid of San Mateo County, Los Angeles Aging Advocacy Coalition, Los Angeles Community Action Network, Los Angeles for a New Economy, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Orange County Food Access Coalition, MLK Coalition of Greater Los Angeles, Orange County Food Bank, Orange County Hunger Coalition, Personal Assistance Services Council of LA County, Project Angel Food, Prototypes, Retirement Housing Foundation, Santa Barbara Food Alliance, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, SEIU Local 721, Social Justice Learning Institute, Southern CA Resource Services for Independent Living, Starting Over, Inc., St. Barnabas Senior Services, Thai Community Development Center, The East Los Angeles Community Union, Time for Change Foundation, Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College, VELA, Veterans For Peace Los Angeles, Westside Center for Independent Living, Women Organizing Resources, Knowledge & Services, Youth Justice Coalition

Sacramento/Northern California

2-1-1 Humboldt, Area 1 Agency on Aging, California Emergency Foodlink, Capitol People First, Cottage Housing Inc., DOGFITE (Disability Organizing Group for Initiating Total Equality, Food for People, Inc., Ford Street Project, Life Support Alliance, Humboldt Area Center for Harm Reduction, Mary Immaculate Residential Facility, Mendocino Food & Nutrition Program, Placer Food Bank, Placer Independent Resource Services, River City Food Bank, Sacramento Housing Alliance, Resources for Independent Living-Sacramento, Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services, Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, Sacramento Loaves & Fishes, Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, The Resource Connection Food Bank, Yolo County Commission on Aging and Adult Services, Yolo Food Bank, Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, Yuba-Sutter Gleaners Food Bank, Inc.

San Diego

Access to Independence, A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing), Community Resource Center, Feeding San Diego, Hunger Advocacy Network, IHSS Network San Diego, Imperial Valley Food Bank, Jewish Family Service of San Diego, Leichtag Foundation, Meals-n-Wheels Greater San Diego, Inc., San Diego Food Bank, San Diego Hunger Coalition, San Diego Senior Alliance