



April 16, 2015

The Honorable Cheryl Brown  
California State Assembly  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Support for AB 474 (Brown and Thurmond)

Dear Assembly Member Brown:

The California In-Home Supportive Services Consumer Alliance (CICA) is committed to improving and enhancing the lives of all those who use and provide In-Home Supportive Services. CICA is a non-profit 501(3)(c) corporation and has a membership of 25 counties throughout California representing recipients and care providers who depend on long-term care services to remain in their own homes. We are writing to you in support of AB 474 (Brown and Thurmond) which would increase the SSI/SSP grants for individuals above the federal poverty level to \$1,099 a month.

In January 2009, the SSI/SSP grant of \$907 a month was worth 100.5 percent of the federal poverty level for a single individual. But since that date the SSP grants were repeatedly cut and no COLAs have been provided. In January 2015, the SSI/SSP grant is now worth just 90.2 percent of the federal poverty level. If the grant cuts had not occurred and the COLAs applied each year, the SSI/SSP grant for individuals would be worth 106.7 percent of the federal poverty level. Put another way, the effect of the grant cuts and the repealing of the COLAs was to push many of the 1.3 million blind, aged and disabled Californians who rely on the program below the federal poverty level. This is one of the most significant reasons that California has seen its poverty rate skyrocket and why we have the highest percentage of people in poverty of any state in the country.

For decades, California provided a COLA on the total SSI/SSP amount every January. This COLA was repealed in 2009 at the insistence of then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Even before the COLA was repealed, the SSP COLA was often suspended and the last state COLA was provided in the 2005–6 budget. Since then, the

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state contributions to the SSI grant for individuals have been cut from \$233 a month down to the federal minimum of \$156 a month, a \$77 a month per person reduction. SSI/SSP grants for couples declined significantly also. The state contribution for a couple in January 2009 was \$568 a month but that has been reduced to \$396.20, a \$171.80 a month cut to the grant. In fact, the combined SSI/SSP grants for both individuals and couples are lower in 2015 than they were in 2009. In fact today's SSP benefit for an individual is lower today than in 1980 when it was \$182 a month.

Due to the SSI cuts and the failure to restore them organizations across California are seeing an increase in SSI recipients' use of food programs and looking for assistance from programs that serve the aged. With the median studio not below 50 percent of the value of an individual benefit in any county and more than the entire benefit in 15 counties (according to the California Budget and Policy Center), many SSI recipients are becoming homeless and going hungry. When people are homeless and hungry they are more likely to require expensive food, medical and nursing home services that would not be required if they could eat properly.

While we fully support AB 474 we encourage the authors and the committee to consider restoring the cuts to SSI/SSP couple grants. It is time to reverse these cuts. All of the cuts.

No person on SSI/SSP should be condemned to poverty. We urge the committee to vote "aye" on AB 474.

Sincerely,

Janie Whiteford & Leoma Lee  
CICA co-Presidents