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Home Care Advocates Decry State Budget Proposal to Decimate IHSS

Cutting IHSS by Half Will Jeopardize Lives and Cost Taxpayers More

(SACRAMENTO, CA) – Dozens of advocates representing more than 450,000 seniors and people with disabilities and their caregivers decried today's revised state budget proposal that would make devastating cuts to cost-effective home care services and called on the Legislature to protect funding for the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. The Governor's revised budget proposes to have stakeholders meet and agree to cuts amounting to \$637.1 million – which is about half of the General Fund spending on home care.

IHSS, California's home care program, was created to ensure that low-income seniors and people with disabilities receive the vital care they need to live safely at home. Although IHSS has been lauded as one of the best such programs in the country, has helped California significantly reduce costs of long-term care for our aging population, and is vital to helping seniors and people with disabilities maintain their independence and dignity, Governor Schwarzenegger today proposed cutting this vital program in half.

The consequences of the latest budget proposal will be immediate, long-lasting, and devastating. Severe reductions to home care will gravely endanger those seniors and people with disabilities who are affected, who will lose the lifeline care that allows them to live safely at home. In addition, the cuts will force roughly half of California's 350,000 caregivers out of work and will increase our state's employment rate.

Independent economists have also shown that slashing IHSS will cost California taxpayers dearly. According to Beacon economics, every dollar the state spends on home care amounts to \$5.44 of economic activity in California, because of additional federal and county dollars and a multiplier effect from caregivers spending their wages.

IHSS consumers and home care providers today called on the Legislature – which has repeatedly rejected the Governor's deepest cuts to IHSS – to join seniors and people with disabilities in protecting quality, affordable home care.

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(See next page for reactions to the proposed cuts by IHSS consumers and advocates.)

"The seniors I represent paid taxes their whole lives, believing that when they needed help they would have it. We've suffered years of deep cuts to the services we count on while oil companies, tobacco companies, and banks walked away with sweetheart deals in every budget. Now the time has come for these giant corporations to pay their fair share to protect jobs and services and invest in California's recovery," said Gary Passmore of the Congress of California Seniors.

"I participate in the IHSS program because it gives me the opportunity to be independent, said John Wilkins, an IHSS consumer in Fresno County. "So it just doesn't make any sense to decimate a cost-effective program like IHSS and force people into nursing homes at five times the cost of home care or let them wind up in the hospital because of a fall, infection, or missed medication."

"In 1989 my 24 year old daughter was hit by a drunk driver on her way home from work. That day changed our lives forever. My daughter is now a quadriplegic and relies on me for the basic things we all take for granted," said Ellen Rollins a home care worker from Santa Clara County. "In home-care has allowed me to take care of my daughter at home where she belongs. Cutting the program would devastate my family and many others."

"The governor would rather deprive an elderly Alzheimer's patient of needed home care than tax oil production like every other oil producing state does," said Doug Moore, executive director of UDW Homecare Providers Union. "He'd rather close schools than tax loopholes. This budget is fiscally irresponsible and morally reprehensible. Cuts alone will not solve our budget problems."

"The federal court already told this administration they couldn't make drastic cuts to IHSS the way they want to because they violate the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws." said Janie Whiteford, Chair of the IHSS Coalition and President of California IHSS Consumer Alliance.

"The Governor says he wants to create jobs, but eliminating IHSS will force hundreds of thousands of hard-working caregivers out of work," said Sandy Varga, an IHSS consumer in Los Angeles. "Half of the 350,000 caregivers could lose their jobs and California's unemployment rate will soar higher."

"IHSS is my independence," said Lauren Steinberg, an IHSS consumer in Berkeley. "My IHSS provider helps me with daily tasks that most people take for granted. It enables me to go to work every day and pay taxes. This Governor's proposal takes away two jobs: my home care worker's and my own. I'll have to go back on benefits; everybody loses."

"I'm a senior citizen and veteran and I worked and paid taxes all my adult life. Now I have a disability. However I'm able to live independently at home because of home care, but enough is enough. I'm tired of hearing our state leaders say 'every program budget cut is on the table.' Why is an efficient program that I rely upon still on the table when it's been proven repeatedly to be among the most cost-effective in the country?" said Herb Meyer, a Korean War veteran, senior and IHSS consumer from Marin County. "The public wants a fair and balanced budget, and that means protecting programs that give taxpayers the most bang for their buck."

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The IHSS coalition includes AARP-California, Access 2 Independence, ACLU of Southern California, The Arc, California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), California Association of Public Authorities (CAPA), California Congress of Seniors, Californians for Disability Rights, Inc. (CDR), California Foundation for Independent Living (CFILC), California IHSS Consumer Alliance (CICA), California Senior Legislature, California Disability Community Action Network (CDCAN), California United Homecare Workers (CUHW), Dayle McIntosh Center for the Disabled, Disability Rights California (DRC), Friends Committee on Legislation, Gray Panthers, Independent Living Resource Center Inc., Independent Living Services of Northern California (ILSNC), Marin IHSS Public Authority, National Senior Citizen's Law Center, Nevada-Sierra-Plumas Public Authority, Northern California ADAPT, Older Women's League, Personal Assistance Service Council of Los Angeles, Resources for Independent Living, San Francisco Public Authority, Service Employees International Union – State Council, SEIU United Long Term Care Workers, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West, SEIU Local 521, Silicon Valley Independent Living Center (SVILC), Southeast Asia Resource Action Center | California Office, Tri-Counties Center for Independent Living, UDW Homecare Providers Union/AFSCME