

**Senior Services Coalition
of Alameda County**

January 22, 2014

Senator Mark Leno, Chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Room 5019, State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Leno,

The Senior Services Coalition represents over 41 organizations that provide health and supportive services to seniors in Alameda County. We are writing you today to express our deep concern that the Governor's proposed budget ignores the needs of low-income seniors.

Over the past ten years, California has dismantled our safety net for seniors. While the population of seniors grew exponentially, state funding dropped by half for California Department on Aging programs. State funding vanished for many programs, including cornerstones of the Older Californians Act that were designed to help seniors successfully navigate the challenges of aging so that they can maintain a steady state. The services cut or eliminated include the Brown Bag Program, caregiver respite, adult day care, foster grandparents, senior companion, case management, senior employment, Linkages... the list of cuts and eliminations is stunningly long. Some programs are just barely holding on – at least in some counties – with local and federal funding. But nowhere is there capacity to serve the need.

There is no mention of restoring these services in any of the Governor's plans for California's turn-around. Yet returning the Older Californian's Act budget to its 2006 levels would only take \$30 million, a small sum when we are looking at putting aside a \$1 billion surplus for fiscal 2014/15. Can it be that the Governor believes that seniors don't contribute to the expansion of opportunities for California's families, investment in education and in jobs? We disagree, and cite the effectiveness of the many services provided under the Older Americans Act.

We ask that the Senate Budget Committee consider advancing a 2014/15 budget that truly reflects Californians' priorities. We're counting on you and your colleagues not forget that "our" priorities include those of seniors.

Sincerely,



Wendy Peterson
Director, Senior Services Coalition of Alameda County