



November 30, 2018

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor-elect, State of California
California State Capitol

Re: Making SSI/SSP a Priority in the Newsom Administration

Dear Governor-elect Newsom,

Congratulations on becoming the next Governor of the state of California. Unlike any other state, California is a trendsetter, not just in the United States, but for the entire world. What we do, what we prioritize will reverberate all over the world. It is an amazing opportunity to make meaningful change and it is as challenging a task as one could imagine.

California has never been in a better economic and fiscal position than now. Governor Brown has done as he promised, to get our fiscal house in order. What is less well known is all he did to lift up the needs of low income and working Californians. By increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, significantly increasing the number of persons with health coverage, providing increased resources to low performing schools, creating a robust earned income tax credit and lessening the impact of fines and fees that disproportionately impacted low income California, Governor Brown has helped make life better for countless Californians too often overlooked.

While we admire all the Governor accomplished, there is a tremendous amount left to be done. Poverty in California is still the highest in the country under the Supplemental Poverty Measure and millions more are struggling to pay rent and stay housed. Inequality in our state is the worst since the 1920's meaning that millions of working Californians are unable to handle an unexpected bill or to save for a rainy day. Some of the worst cuts from the recession have still not been restored and nearly one million children live at less than half the federal poverty level.

During the recession former Governor Schwarzenegger significantly reduced cash assistance for seniors and persons living with disabilities who rely on the federal-state SSI-SSP program. Grants for single SSI recipients were cut by \$77 a month and state cost of living adjustment was permanently repealed. These devastating cuts dropped 1 million SSI recipients into poverty and they have stayed there ever since. As our housing crisis deepened and rents escalated, SSI recipients took the brunt of the impact. Many became homeless, were forced to live in vehicles and even more had to rely on emergency food assistance as a way of life. Despite large budget surpluses and robust economic times for many years, these cuts have still not been restored.

Due to the trauma we have seen across the state in the senior and disabled communities, we organized a statewide coalition to push the state to listen to the needs of persons on SSI. Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) represents more than 200 organizations across the state that have

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seen firsthand the distress being visited on some of our most vulnerable residents. We have been working to alleviate the crisis caused by the grant cuts and the housing crisis by repeatedly asking for the cuts to be restored. This past year we had the first real success when Governor Brown and the Legislature agreed to make SSI recipients eligible for federal SNAP benefits.

While we appreciate the significance of providing food assistance to SSI recipients, our work is hardly done. We are asking you to work with us to take the following steps to truly restore, not just the grant cuts, but the dignity of persons living on SSI.

Step 1

Restore the SSI grant cuts for both single individuals and couples so that no SSI recipient is ever again living below the federal poverty level.

Step 2

Restore the state cost of living adjustment immediately so that the grants retain their purchasing power over time.

Step 3

Finish the job of protecting families that will lose SNAP benefits when the state makes SSI recipients eligible for food assistance. Governor Brown and the Legislature provided temporary funding to “hold harmless” these families but we are calling on you to make this solution permanent.

We are inspired by your focus on solving the housing and homeless crisis afflicting our state. For too long the needs of the poor and low income working people have not been addressed. We believe that by putting these issues front and center in your administration that we can make real progress. We stand ready to work with you to help you succeed. Please do not hesitate to ask us to help you to achieve your goals. We would be honored to meet with and your Administration in January to begin the process of moving California to the next level of greatness. Please contact Mike Herald at the Western Center on Law and Poverty at mherald@wclp.org or Andrew Cheyne of the California Association of Food Banks at andrew@cafoodbanks.org.

CA4SSI Statewide Organizational Endorsers

AARP, 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, Meals on Wheels California, 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 and 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,

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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, 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-on-Wheels Greater San Diego, Inc., San Diego Food Bank, San Diego Hunger Coalition, San Diego Senior Alliance