

Lifting more than 1 million Californians out of poverty: Prioritizing SSI/SSP in the 2015-16 Budget

Californians for SSI (CA4SSI) is a statewide coalition of over 200 organizations across the senior and aging, disability rights, housing and homeless, anti-hunger and anti-poverty sectors. CA4SSI seeks to ensure that blind, aged and disabled recipients of SSI/SSP receive adequate support to keep them above the poverty level. Sadly, the Governor's budget is silent on the plight of SSI recipients.

We are asking the Legislature to prioritize SSI/SSP funding in the 2015-16 budget.

The Magnitude of Cuts to SSI/SSP

- For decades California periodically provided an annual SSI/SSP COLA until it was repealed in 2009.
- In addition, since 2009 the state funded SSP portion of grants to individuals have been cut from \$233 a month to the federal minimum of \$156 a month today, a \$77 monthly reduction per person.
- During this time SSP grants for couples declined by \$171.80 a month, from \$568 a month in January 2009 to \$396.20 today.

To put this in perspective, the SSI/SSP caseload has climbed by some 75,000 since 2007, yet the Administration proposes to spend \$2.5 billion – an \$1.4 billion cut from the \$3.9 billion spent in 2007-8, after adjusting for inflation according to the California Budget Project.

- Over this period of cuts, the cost of living has risen by roughly 14 percent.
- **These cuts are being absorbed by persons with limited access to the essentials of life.**

How SSI/SSP Grant Cuts Pushed 1 Million People into Poverty

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.

- Today, the SSI/SSP grant for individuals is worth just 90.7 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 currently would be worth 106.7 percent of the federal poverty level.

Who Is Impacted by Low SSI/SSP Grants?

The grant cuts and the COLA repeal have pushed more than 1 million blind, aged and disabled Californians into poverty, and are a significant reason why we have the highest poverty rate of any state in the country according to the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure.

- More than half the caseload is composed of women.
- **These cuts come with high costs:** SSI/SSP recipients are forced to increase their reliance on emergency food, shelter, and health providers. Many recipients are becoming homeless and going hungry, requiring expensive food, medical and nursing home services that would not be needed if grants were sufficient to meet basic needs.
- This situation is made worse as California is the only state where SSI/SSP recipients are barred from receiving food stamps.

Restore the SSI/SSP Grant Cuts and the COLA

No person on SSI/SSP should be living in poverty or even at the Supplemental Poverty Level. CA4SSI is requesting that the Legislature restore both the SSP grant cuts and the cost of living adjustment.

CA4SSI Statewide Organizational Endorsers

AllCare Alliance, CA Association of Food Banks, California Alliance for Retired Americans, California Church IMPACT, California Council of the Blind, California Emergency Foodlink, California Food Policy Advocates, California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, California Partnership, 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, Food Chain Workers Alliance, Housing CA, IHSS Consumer Alliance, Insight Center, Lutheran Office of Public Policy – California, Magnolia Women's Recovery Center, National Association of Social Workers/CA Chapter, National Center for Lesbian Rights, National Senior Citizens Law Center, ProduceGood, Redwood Empire Food Bank, Resources for Independent Living, Service Center for Independent Life, St. Anthony Foundation, The Gubbio Project, Western Center on Law and Poverty

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

Los Angeles / Southern California ACLU of Southern California, Adams Vermont/Gardena CFMS, Clergy Caucus of Inland Congregations United for Change, CLUE-LA, Community Action Agency of San Bernardino County, Communities Actively Living Independent & Free, Community Action Agency, Dayle McIntosh 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 Health Care Los Angeles, Hunger Action LA, Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles, Jewish Labor Committee Western Region, Latino Diabetes Association, Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley, Los Angeles Community Action Network, Los Angeles for a New Economy, Los Angeles Regional Food Bank, Orange County Food Access Coalition, Orange County Food Bank, Orange County Hunger Coalition, Personal Assistance Services Council of LA County, Project Angel Food, Prototypes, Santa Barbara Food Alliance, Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County, Social Justice Learning Institute, Southern CA Resource Services for Independent Living, Starting Over, Inc., Thai Community Development Center, 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

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

Sacramento/Northern California 2-1-1 Humboldt, Area 1 Agency on Aging, California Emergency Foodlink, Cottage Housing Inc., 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, 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 Healthy Aging Alliance, Yuba-Sutter Gleaners Food Bank, Inc.

Bay Area ABD Productions, AIDS Housing Alliance/SF, Alameda County Community Food Bank, 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, Community Action Alliance/ Agnes Memorial Church, Community Action Marin, Community Action of Napa Valley Food Bank, CSI Support & Development, Disability Services & Legal Center, Downs Memorial United Methodist Church, East Bay Food Justice Project, Family Emergency Shelter Coalition, Food 2 Go, Harbor House Ministries, Hayward Seventh Day Adventist Church, Hazon Bay Area, Hope 4 the Heart, Jewish Family & Children's Services of the East Bay, L.A. Kitchen, Lake Merritt United Methodist Church Food Pantry, LIFT – Levantate, LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Los Robles Apartments, Marin Asian Advocacy Project, Marin Food Policy Council, Meals on Wheels of San Francisco, Mercy Brown Bag Program, Mission for the Homeless. 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, Seventh Step Foundation, Senior & Disability Action, SF-Marin Food Bank, Society of Saint Vincent de Paul-San Leandro Conference, South Hayward Parish, St. Francis Living Room, St. Lawrence O'Toole Parish, St. Mary's Center, Street Level Health Project, Tenderloin Housing Clinic, The Neighborhood Village, The R.E.F.U.G.E, Tri-City Volunteers, United Seniors of Oakland and Alameda County, Whistlestop