



YOLO HEALTHY AGING ALLIANCE

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October 14, 2021

The Honorable Diane Feinstein
Fax: 202-228-3954
The Honorable Alex Padilla
FAX: 202- 224-2200
The Honorable John Garamendi
FAX 202-225-5914

Support of key features for seniors: The 3.5 Trillion Build Back Better plan: Medicare additions of vision, hearing and dental benefits, reducing the Medicare age eligibility, Medicare able to negotiate lower medication prices, housing support, home and elder care funding

Dear Senators Diane Feinstein and Alex Padilla and Congressman John Garamendi:

We, as advocates and members of the Yolo Healthy Aging Alliance, are in support of the following items to remain in the Build Back Better \$3.5 trillion package that address housing, Medicare changes to include dental, vision and hearing benefits along with lower drug costs, Medicare eligibility changes, home and elder care funding. The YHAA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to assist in enhancement and well-being of older adults in Yolo County. The Build Back Better Plan will be of great assistance to the seniors in our community.

At the time of this letter, the Banking Committee may receive \$332 billion for investment in housing affordability among other provisions. Our community has determined that our most vulnerable older adults have been waiting years for housing vouchers, so we encourage inclusion of more vouchers for Yolo County. The last statistics from Jan 2019 highlighted from 2017-2019 homelessness was up 42.7% and 20% of those are 55 years and older. Please consider adding more Section 8 Housing Choice vouchers to assist our seniors.

In the original plan, \$400 billion was proposed to expand access to quality, affordable home and community-based care for our aging population and people with disabilities and to expand access to Long Term Care services under Medicaid. The plan also provided for increased wages and benefits for care giving jobs. We support the expansion of access to home and community-based services (HCBS) and are

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in support of innovations in the delivery of long term care. During these times with COVID-19 the entire Medicaid program has been under extreme strain as well as our HCBS system. As seen in the pandemic, our seniors are extremely vulnerable in extended care facilities. Our seniors are safer and prefer to stay in their own homes with needed caregiver help which save lives and money. Currently some family members or friends fill in as caregivers as there is insufficient funding for HCBS workers. Then, the family and friends are not able to work part or full time which is a further hit to their finances and the economy.

We are in favor of the dental, hearing, and vision coverage being a part the traditional Medicare and not just with the advantage plans as advantage plans are not accessed by all the seniors. Having our low income seniors benefit from hearing, dental, and vision improvements help with safety in the home and potentially facilitate aging in their homes, a savings for our service programs. In addition, mental and behavioral health care coverage must be a standard part of any health measure.

Another savings in your plan is that Medicare will be able to negotiate drug prices. Please keep this in the plan as more people will be entering Medicare and lower drug prices will help to keep this Medicare more solvent in the future.

Thank you for your work on this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sheila A. Allen". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Sheila A. Allen, RN, PhD
Executive Director