



March 4, 2019

The Honorable Ash Kalra
State Capitol
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1434 (Kalra) Public social services: SSI/SSP – Support

Dear Assembly Members Kalra, Reyes and Thurmond:

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) writes this letter in strong support of AB 1434. CARA is California's largest grassroots, statewide senior advocacy organization, representing over 1,000,000 seniors and their families through our 270+ affiliated organizations. Many members are living on the edge of homelessness, or already homeless, because SSI/SSP grants are inadequate to cover their basic living expenses.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI), is a federally funded income support program; Supplementary Security Payment (SSP) is a state supplement, but in California it has been reduced to the lowest legal amount. From 2008 to 2012, \$4.6 billion was taken from California SSP, reducing payments by \$77 per month for 1.3 million SSI/SSP recipients. Some of the State SSP cuts have been offset by Federal SSI increases, but today's total monthly payments are still \$30 less than five years ago, and eliminating cost-of-living raises is an additional \$161/month effective loss.

When accounting for actual living costs, California has the highest poverty rates in the US, 23% overall and 25% for seniors. 56% of California seniors live under twice what's needed for bare existence, counting actual costs, and available government assistance. For example, a studio apartment rent is over half the SSI/SSP payment in all California counties, and over the full payment in 13 counties.

The recession ended several years ago. However, recession-era cuts to SSI/SSP remain in place. California must do its share to raise SSI/SSP for its most vulnerable residents. AB 1434 would reinstate the cost-of-living adjustment beginning January 1, 2020. AB 1434 would also require a maximum aid payment provided to an individual or a married couple that does not equal or exceed 100% of the 2019 federal poverty level to be increased to an amount that equals 100% of the federal poverty level.

For these reasons, CARA strongly supports AB 1434. Our organization has designated it as one of our priority bills, and we look forward to working with you on its passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hene Kelly".

Hene Kelly,
Legislative Director
415-533-5244