April 11th, 2023

The Honorable Laura Friedman
Chair, Assembly Transportation Committee
1020 N Street, Room 112
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 540 (Wicks) Social Service Transportation Improvement Act – Support

Dear Chair Friedman,

The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA), one of the state’s foremost grassroots senior and disability advocacy organizations, representing over 1 million Californians, is proud to support AB 540 (Wicks), which expands transportation options and combats social isolation for older adults and seniors by establishing a "Coordinated Transportation Service Agency" (CTSA) in all 58 California counties while respecting and supporting existing CTSA. Additionally, this bill expands the authority of the CTSA to facilitate integrating the needs of seniors and the disabled into public policy and investment processes, including engagement in capital improvement program review, general plan development, transit stop access plans and more.

Older adults (age 60 to 64) and seniors (age 65 and up) are the fastest growing demographic in California. By 2030, at least 25%, nearly 8 million Californians, will be older adults and seniors. Moreover, the suburban and rural communities, where many of California's seniors reside, have struggled to integrate access to accessible transportation (AT) and Paratransit Services as a result of continual underfunding from the state and local governments.

AT and Paratransit services are vital for older adults, seniors and people with disabilities as they provide a means of transportation that incorporate special accommodations and services to ensure their riders can travel safely with the proper assistance.

While other sectors of California’s transportation system regularly benefit from increased funding and improved policies, AT services have not been meaningfully updated since they were initially set up in 1979.

California Transportation Service Agencies is the ideal mechanism to enhance the AT and Paratransit systems as they promote the provisions of coordinated accessible transportation services in each county. AB 540 will implement CTSA's in each California county to finally address the infrastructure gaps in the accessible transit system.

CARA/ 1675 7th St. PO Box 23754/ Oakland, CA 94623/ 510-662-4086/ www.californiaalliance.org
Affording seniors, and all Californians, viable resources to age with grace, dignity and independence - such as investing in coordinated, accessible transit - not only represent CARA’s foundational principles but we believe will ensure a healthier, more accessible and inclusive California for our aging community.

For these reasons, CARA strongly supports AB 540, and we respectfully ask for your AYE vote.

Sincerely,

Hene Kelly                                                  Keith Umemoto  
Chair, Legislative Committee                                Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)           California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA)