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January 13, 2020

Dr. Mark Ghaly,
Director, California Health and Human Services Agency
1600 9th Street, Suite 460
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: CLTCOA's Priorities in the Master Plan for Aging

On behalf of the California Long-Term Care Association (CLTCOA), a membership association representing the 35 local Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Programs, their staff and volunteers, I am pleased to present this letter of proposals for the Master Plan for Aging LTSS. As the activities of the LTC Ombudsman Program are directed at improving the quality of life and quality of care residents receive in licensed long-term care facilities, our recommendations are directed to Goal #1.

Goal #1: We will live where we choose as we age and have the help we and our families need to do so.
Objective 1.1: Californians will have access to the help we need to live in the homes and communities we choose as we age.

Problem Statement:

CLTCOA members in recent years report to CLTCOA that illegal/unsafe nursing facility evictions are the fastest-growing complaint for Ombudsman programs. This local program experience was included in the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Annual Federal FY2017 report, "Since Federal Fiscal Year 2012, the (LTC Ombudsman) Program has seen a 63 percent increase in complaints about discharges and evictions in skilled nursing facilities. Discharge and eviction complaints ranked fourth in the top five complaints made by or on behalf of nursing home residents. Only complaints about resident to resident physical or sexual abuse, resident conflict, and physical abuse ranked higher."

Many of these illegal/unsafe discharges and evictions are the result of the lack of affordable residential care facilities for the elderly across the state.

California needs to implement a public social insurance option to provide middle-income residents with the ability to secure long-term care services to ensure safety and dignity for all older and disabled adults.

Recommendation:

CLTCOA is a proud member of the California Aging and Disability Alliance and believes CADA has identified and is promoting a workable approach for the creation of a social insurance LTSS benefit in California.

Problem Statement:

A significant percentage of the general population of California older adults do not know that most long-term care services are not covered benefits through their medical insurance. This lack of knowledge results in the families being unprepared for the high costs of long-term care, often after an accident or sudden illness.

Recommendation:

CLTCOA
California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Association

The creation and implementation of a statewide public information campaign on covered LTSS.

Problem Statement:

One of the statutory activities of the LTC Ombudsman Program is witnessing activities of advanced health care directives for residents of skilled nursing facilities. These documents are vital for individuals to be able to identify their individual preferences for health, medical care, end of life decisions, and to designate a responsible party or personal representative.

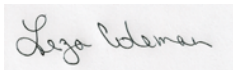
A growing challenge in skilled nursing facilities is the increasing numbers of residents who are “unrepresented” or “unbefriended.” These individuals have been diagnosed as lacking decision-making capacity as a result of cognitive impairments or intellectual disabilities. They do not have family or friends willing or able to advocate or speak on the resident’s behalf.

Recommendation:

To remedy this lack of advanced planning is to conduct public campaigns to increase the utilization of advanced health care directives, and specifically the need to appoint a surrogate decision-maker. These documents could be made available in local city and county offices, like DMVs, or post offices. Doctors’ offices could be encouraged to make these documents available for their patients.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input. We look forward to being working partners with you and your department to help with the implementation of the Master Plan for Aging.

Sincerely
Leza Coleman

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

Executive Director CLTCOA