

To All Counties Board of Supervisor,

On behalf of the 400,000 In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) providers we represent and the low-income seniors and people with disabilities they care for, SEIU Local 2015 is working with other stakeholders like yourself to request that the state take immediate direct action to support and protect the IHSS community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our members are truly on the front lines of this crisis. They provide personal and paramedical services in intimate settings without the benefits or resources of a healthcare facility. Many IHSS providers are working in near isolation with little support or trustworthy information. Their clients include the Californians who are at the extreme end of the risk spectrum for experiencing the most adverse effects of COVID-19 should they contract the virus: the elderly and people who live with conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), heart disease and diabetes.

Should COVID-19 take hold in the IHSS community, the result would undoubtedly be a catastrophic increase in fatalities. We are asking you to engage your peers within CSAC and Public Authority Boards to join with us in advocating that the state take the following actions:

1. Issue IHSS-specific guidelines that include both avoiding transmission and caring for clients and family members who may have been exposed or infected with the virus.
2. Ensure IHSS providers have sufficient protective supplies such as masks, gloves and disinfectants.
3. Allow providers to work hours in addition to their maximum weekly limit (i.e. no violations) if necessary as a result of COVID-19.
4. Provide the necessary number of paid sick leave hours for IHSS providers to allow them to quarantine when sick, following CDPH guidelines for caregivers.
5. Compensate IHSS providers for providing services to clients as a result of COVID-19 that are outside of the client's authorized tasks. For example, for time spent traveling to and checking in on their client to ensure their safety.
6. Provide free testing and treatment for IHSS providers and clients as quickly as possible and target outreach to ensure all providers and clients know where to get testing.
7. Ensure all COVID-19 instructions and information are made accessible and in languages other than English.

In addition to these life-saving measures, we also recommend the state take the following actions to bolster the IHSS workforce and support the continued functioning of the IHSS program:

1. Pause the rollout of Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) and the associated timesheet changes as IHSS providers are unable to visit union or county offices to access trainings.
2. Expand eligibility for Unemployment Insurance to include spouse and parent IHSS providers who may be left without an income if their client is hospitalized. We advise any other additional emergency supplemental support for workers also keep this population of IHSS providers in mind.
3. Create IHSS provider backup systems in every county to ensure clients obtain services if their provider is not available.
4. Fund an increased wage to recruit the necessary number of emergency backup workers.
5. Fund cost of criminal background checks and expedite enrollment of new workers.

As advocates for the IHSS program, the workers who make it possible, and the clients they serve, we will continue to champion many changes not listed here as we work with state officials and other stakeholders to build a robust and sustainable long-term care system. The above requests, however, are needed immediately to directly address the COVID-19 emergency. We look forward to your support in encouraging a rapid response to these critical needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'AV' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line.

April Verrett, President SEIU Local 2105

Bcc: Arnulfo DeLaCruz, EVP SEIU Local 2015
Kim Evon, EVP SEIU Local 2015
Dereck Smith, EVP SEIU Local 2015