

Sacramento Comes Together on a Master Plan for Aging

Perspectives on Aging with Dignity • February 12, 2019



Bruce Chernof, MD, President and CEO of The SCAN Foundation, dedicated to creating a society where older adults can access health and supportive services of their choosing to meet their needs. The Perspectives Series provides opinions and observations about transforming the way in which we age. Follow Dr. Bruce on Twitter [@DrBruce_TSF](https://twitter.com/DrBruce_TSF).

Last week, [We Stand With Seniors](#) and the Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care co-hosted a Capitol film screening of [Lives Well Lived](#) with more than 275 attendees, including state officials, legislators, and members of Governor Newsom's cabinet. The film showcased the resilience and wisdom of 40 older adults who have endured life's challenges and thrived through engaged, meaningful long lives. However, as illustrated by the [follow-on policy discussion](#) moderated by State Treasurer Fiona Ma, not everyone in California is so fortunate to be able to age with dignity and independence. Many older Californians face financial stress, isolation inside their own community, and limited access to the services and supports needed to live well on their own terms.

Every day, we hear stories of people struggling to weave together the range of services they need to remain in their homes and communities. Families don't know where to turn for help or how to pay for services. They are bounced between programs with little assurance that their needs will be met. Too many individuals fall into poverty while paying out of pocket for long-term services and supports (LTSS). This is not a system we want for ourselves or our families, and it is not the system that California's older adults deserve.

The panel discussion made clear that support for a [Master Plan for Aging](#) runs deep in Sacramento. Local policymakers recognize that without a strategy to meet the needs of all aging Californians, the state will confront mounting challenges.


The facts are well established. By 2030, California's population of older adults will increase by four million. The issues impacting this population are far and wide—including access to health care, LTSS, mental health, housing, transportation, workforce, and others. For example:

- **Health care:** The state's 1.4 million individuals eligible for both Medicare and Medi-Cal are the highest need, highest cost population in the state, yet the fragmented system of care prevents many from accessing services in a coordinated, streamlined fashion. Integrated care offers the opportunity to improve health and daily-living outcomes while also lowering costs. While there are promising results from several types of managed care plans, California lacks a long-term plan for integrating service delivery statewide.
- **Housing:** Nearly 50 percent of all single homeless adults are older than age 50. The [UCLA Center for Health Policy Research](#) reports that more than half of the state's low-income older California are severely rent-burdened, spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing. And last year, [Los Angeles reported a surge in the homeless population older than age 62](#), despite an overall decrease in the general homeless population. We need an intentional strategy for how to meet the housing needs of California's low-income older adults.
- **Workforce:** We need a well-trained, culturally-competent [workforce to meet the needs of California's aging population](#). Yet, the supply of trained paraprofessionals and professionals is not keeping pace with the population demand now, let alone in the future. Unpaid family caregivers are the cornerstone of California's LTSS system, with 4.5 million family caregivers providing approximately \$57 billion worth of unpaid care. How are we as a state going to prepare for the broader workforce needs of the aging population while supporting our family caregivers?

These are just a few of the areas that need to be addressed through a thoughtful strategy that prepares California for the aging of its population. We are thrilled that Governor Newsom committed to developing a [Master Plan for Aging](#)—first at The SCAN Foundation's 2018 LTSS Summit as a candidate, and now today during his first State of the State speech as governor. This is a significant step forward, and California legislators are also starting to champion a master plan through new legislation. If the promise is fulfilled, California will be well-suited to meet the population's needs. A comprehensive master plan will help identify risks, establish priorities, and guide efficient use of the state's resources to ensure a stronger California, now and into the future.



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