



# HAND IN HAND

## The Domestic Employers Network

January 30, 2020

Ms. Kim McCoy Wade, Director, California Department of Aging

Ms. Anastasia Dodson, Associate Director, Department of Health Care Services

Submitted electronically to: [engage@aging.ca.gov](mailto:engage@aging.ca.gov)

### **Master Plan on Aging Comment Letter**

Dear Director Wade and Associate Director Dodson,

We are very excited about the work of the state to create a Master Plan on Aging to support older adults and people with disabilities and their families in California.

I write on behalf of Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network. We are a member of the California Aging and Disability Alliance (CADA) and are a national membership organization with a local, California chapter. We are the only organization in the country of employers of domestic workers and our members include older adults, people with disabilities and their family members who employ personal care assistants or home care workers- both out of pocket as well as through the IHSS program. In CA, there are an estimated 2 million households that employ domestic workers.

As people who depend on both unpaid caregivers and paid caregivers, we understand fundamentally the importance of creating a stronger safety net to help all of us access the long-term supports and services (LTSS) that we need to live and age with dignity.<sup>1</sup> We also recognize the need to improve working conditions for the paid workforce- the majority of whom can't afford to support their own families or save for their own retirements.<sup>2</sup> It is for these reasons, we support the creation of a universal Long-term Supports and Services (LTSS) social insurance program for all people at all ages (cradle to grave) as well as other measures that

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<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the average person over the age 65 will need at least one year of personal assistance.

<sup>2</sup> According to *US Homecare Workers: Key Facts*, a 2018 PHI study, there are 2.1 million U.S. home care workers who earn a median wage of \$11.03 an hour and \$15,100 a year. Thus, twenty percent of home care workers live in poverty, compared to seven percent of all U.S. workers.

would expand access to affordable LTSS for everyone. Additional ideas that have promise to help strengthen the LTSS safety net include raising the eligible income level of the working disabled program, expanding access to the IHSS program, reducing the share of cost requirements within IHSS, and improving wages, benefits and working conditions for direct care workers that not only will help them, but will also help recruit and retain more workers to meet the growing need.

In developing a recommendation for a new LTSS social insurance program/benefit, we strongly urge you to be BOLD in your vision so that ALL Californians can afford the support they need to live and age with dignity in their homes and communities. This means that the program must go beyond the version that was approved in the state of Washington last year to cover everyone who needs it and to be more generous in its level of benefit. It must include:

- People who are born with a disability or who acquire their disability as a youth;
- People who are out of the workforce (such as those who've retired or had to leave the workforce early due to a disability or a family caregiving need);
- Immigrant workers who pay their taxes using an Individual Tax Id Number (ITIN); and
- People who work as independent contractors.

We also encourage you to consider how such a new program can help address the growing shortage of direct care workforce by including provisions that improve wages and working conditions, enable immigrant workers to access LTSS jobs, and support their ability to organize, form or join a union or worker cooperative.<sup>3</sup> Dignified working conditions are good for the workers and their employers and clients.

We look forward to working with you to make California's LTSS system one where everyone who is touched by it- seniors, people with disabilities, unpaid family caregivers and paid direct care workers- get the support they need to live and age with dignity.

Most sincerely,



Lindsay Imai Hong  
California Director

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<sup>3</sup> UC Berkeley Labor Center's 2017 [California's Homecare Crisis: Raising Wages is Key to the Solution](http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/Californias-Homecare-Crisis.pdf), reports that the California Employment Development Department projects that an additional 200,000 homecare workers will be needed by 2024. The Labor Center estimates that if everyone with a need for help with activities of daily living were to receive those supports, the state would need as many as 600,000 to 3.2 million additional homecare workers by 2030 given that the number of individuals above age 65 in CA will grow from 5.2 million in 2015 to 9 million in 2030. <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2017/Californias-Homecare-Crisis.pdf>

