



Gray Panthers Santa Barbara Network

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April 14, 2025

Honorable Board of Supervisors
By email sbcob@countyofsb.org

The County of Santa Barbara is at risk of losing Federal funding as are all State and local governments due to a highly volatile Federal Administration.

Many economic experts are predicting a recession. We are all at risk, but who will suffer most when the County starts losing pass through monies and competitive grants go away? Clearly the most at risk populations are children and older adults. On the block are Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and social services block grants supportive of these most need populations. Food banks throughout the Country are experiencing shortages, as are Meals and Wheels programs.

We have reviewed the materials for the Budget Workshop. We realize that these are not final budget hearings, but present an opportunity for the Board to provide direction and offer your priorities in advance of those June hearings. The Budget Director's presentation, on Pg 20, reveals a \$33 million surplus, largely attributable to Property taxes. Your CEO is recommending that virtually all of that discretionary surplus be allocated to specific funds and departments, the bulk of it to the Sheriff and Jail.

We are suggesting the Board initiate a rainy-day or "crisis response" fund specifically to backfill the anticipated loss of food and services for our most vulnerable. The process for emergency grants could be "housed" either in the existing Human Services Commission process, or in Social Services, which manages a "food insecurity" program. Please consider adding a percentage of discretionary funding in order to respond to food and health care services.

Finally, it is concerning that despite these looming impacts to our most vulnerable populations, the CEO is proposing the elimination of almost 50 vacant positions in the Social services Department. These positions include seven positions in Child Welfare Services, as well as the unfunding of the Public Health Nurse position.

The Gray Panthers Santa Barbara Network was formed to advocate, educate and agitate on behalf of older adults in our community. We urge you to exercise your discretion and give direction to the CEO to return to the budget hearings in June with options for strengthening- not weakening- the County's safety net for the most vulnerable.

Sincerely,

Gray Panthers Santa Barbara Network Board



