

September 24, 2019

Lynna Monell
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
385 North Arrowhead, San Bernardino, CA 92415



RE: Please support the re-negotiations for a contract to increase the pay of SEIU 2015 members

To Supervisors Lovingood, Rutherford, Rowe, Hagman, and Gonzales:

The San Bernardino County Young Democrats Executive Board unequivocally supports SEIU 2015 members in their continued negotiations to receive an overdue and necessary wage increase. More than 30,000 people, including low-income seniors and those with disabilities in our county, depend on caregivers through the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the number of seniors who will require support services will double by the year 2030 in our state.¹ Moreover, given the socioeconomic status of our county with 12 percent of our seniors living in poverty, the number of seniors who will require the services in-home due to lack of affordability of nursing homes is projected to spike upwards in the next 10 years. Fortunately, in-home support services are cost-effective; compared to nursing home care, in-home care is 68 percent less costly.¹ In-home care also provides a sense of dignity and respect for those who are receiving care.

Retention and recruitment of IHSS providers are becoming increasingly difficult and jeopardizing the continuity of care for your constituents who need these services. While schools are working to address these workforce shortages by training workers to enter the field, our county has failed to properly negotiate wage increases for the last ten years. This not only discourages those who are currently working but it dissuades the development of a future workforce. Home care workers are burdened with having to compete with rising costs in education, healthcare, and rising housing costs while their wages remain stagnant. The hourly wage for home care workers is currently \$12.00 which is not at par with the livable wage standard for this county. The work of caregivers is physically and mentally demanding as they provide constant care through the administration of medications, meal preparation, feeding, bathing, transporting, and grooming the most vulnerable who cannot care for themselves. Many times, home care workers provide care to those who have intellectual or developmental disabilities instead of placing them in formal institutions that can be costly and inhumane. This job requires skill, patience, and above all else, compassion. It's not easy and it is certainly not a job that can be done by everybody.



The work of IHSS generates millions of dollars for our economy with federal and state investments coming out to \$347 million. Over 2,149 local jobs and \$84 million in profits have been generated; as a result, the Gross Regional Product experienced a \$145 million addition to its value. Even with minimum wages, IHSS workers are an economic engine for our county. Legislators recognize this value and are working to pass legislation that would require counties to properly negotiate contracts for home care workers within a limited time-frame or risk losing state and federal funding for the program.

As roughly 90 percent of homecare workers are female, and more than half of the home care workers are people of color, failing to reach an agreement will only exacerbating the gender and racial wage gap.³ More than 50 percent of home care workers must turn to public assistance, especially because they do not receive healthcare benefits. Our system is broken. Those who are employed by the county should never have to rely on the counties' public assistance programs just to get by. Their employment and work for those who are most vulnerable should be enough.

With this letter, we are not only asking you to do the *right* thing, we are asking you to do the *logical* thing. Show our generation that our government is here to uplift those who are willing to work hard. We implore you to support and expedite the negotiation process for SEIU 2015 members to receive wage increases.

Sincerely,

Arthur Congo, President of San Bernardino County Young Democrats
Executive Board of San Bernardino County Young Democrats

References:

1. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/planning-for-californias-growing-senior-population/>
2. http://www.sbcounty.gov/Uploads/CAO/Feature/Content/SB_2018_REPORT_-3.pdf
3. https://phinational.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/phi_homecare_factsheet_2017_0.pdf