



Policy Priorities for 2020

(As Approved by the CSAC Board of Directors February 13, 2020)

California State Association of Counties

County policy concerns are most often centered on resources to carry out state and local service responsibilities, the authority to carry out those responsibilities in local communities, and partnership with the state to improve existing programs.

Those concerns pose particular challenges as they relate to policy issues that CSAC is prioritizing in 2020: defending the Mental Health Services Act, wildfires and disaster preparedness, housing and homelessness, In-Home Support Services, the 2020 U.S. Census, juvenile justice reforms, and local governance and land use authority preservation.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/HOMELESSNESS/HOUSING

California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM)

The “California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal” proposal, or CalAIM, is a broad and ambitious package put forth by the state to simplify and streamline the Medi-Cal program through federal waivers, state law changes, and regulations. CalAIM has significant implications – both fiscal and policy – for many county health and human services functions, including behavioral health services, social services eligibility, county public hospitals, and cross-sector initiatives for foster youth and those who are homeless or incarcerated. The financial impact for counties is unknown because the CalAIM proposal contains both opportunities for funding and changes that could increase costs. CSAC is working to ensure the Newsom Administration is aware of the county fiscal perspective through input by CSAC, county administrative offices, and a variety of county health and human services departments.

Behavioral Health Issues

County behavioral health services and funding will continue to dominate health and homelessness policy conversations in 2020. CSAC will be proactive in working to gain additional flexibility within the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA, created by Proposition 63 of 2004) and protect county allocations and funding. CSAC will also focus on cross-sector collaboration and efforts to build robust and responsive services with schools, the criminal justice system, and other stakeholders.

Homelessness and Poverty Issues

Homelessness remains a top Association priority in 2020 and county health and human services programs remain a critical focus, including general relief/general assistance, federal welfare programs such as CalWORKs and CalFresh, conservatorships and changes to the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, data sharing between county departments, child support changes, extended foster care, safe parking and other shelter programs, and behavioral health. CSAC will also advocate for flexibility in the use of existing homelessness funding so counties can address local needs without unnecessary restrictions.

Affordable Housing

The affordability and availability of housing is at crisis levels in almost every part of the state. The housing issue is not only a crisis in its own right, it’s also a main driver of California’s homelessness emergency. CSAC will advocate for funding for affordable housing, including new state funding for

construction of homes affordable to households at all income levels. CSAC will continue to focus on implementation of recent housing legislation, including allocation of recently approved bonds, as well as full implementation of new homelessness programs, such as No Place Like Home.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)

CSAC will continue to prioritize the fiscal sustainability of the IHSS program. In 2019, CSAC supported the Governor's IHSS proposal which led to the enactment of a lowered County IHSS Maintenance of Effort (MOE). In 2020, CSAC will work closely with the Administration and counties to continue implementing the new MOE and to engage on the IHSS collective bargaining provisions.

CLIMATE & RESILIENCY

The Legislature will continue to focus on a variety of topics related to improving our statewide resiliency to disasters and adapting to the impacts of climate change, including measures that help fund resiliency work at the local level. CSAC will continue to advocate for flexible funding at the local level to help prepare, respond, and recover from disasters.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS)

The State's investor-owned electric utilities are more frequently utilizing de-energization policies and shutting off electric power, referred to as Public Safety Power Shut-offs (PSPS), to protect against wildfire ignition and to enhance public safety as permitted under California law. These PSPS events have a significant impact on our communities and our local economies, often times leaving large segments of the population without power for days at a time. CSAC will continue to engage the IOUs and stakeholder groups to work towards better coordination during PSPS events and ensure for adequate resources and communication to sensitive populations.

Utility Liability

The discussion of utility liability continues to re-emerge as PG&E faces additional liability year after year for igniting wildfires in California. The utility has openly lobbied in bankruptcy court for changes to inverse condemnation law, and despite constitutional protections of our legal standing, this will continue to be an issue as the IOU emerges from bankruptcy. CSAC will stand firm with our coalition partners to continue to protect the rights of victims and local governments, while holding utilities accountable for their actions.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Fine and Fees

The Legislature will continue its efforts to eliminate fines and fees within the criminal justice system which counties use to support a wide array of criminal justice programs. As numerous and diverse programs and reforms have been enacted by the State, many of which are tied to an associated fee or fine as a funding source, counties rely on the current funding structure now in place. CSAC will continue to work with our county partners to ensure that the counties have the funding necessary to support local programs.

Trial Court Security

Trial court security was realigned to the counties as part of 2011 Criminal Justice Realignment. In some counties the amount of funding that was provided has not kept up with increased personnel and security costs. Trial court security has been a CSAC priority for a number of years. CSAC will remain

engaged on this issue with our state sheriffs association and work with the Administration, Legislature, and stakeholders to approve the appropriate ongoing funding levels for new court security costs.

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile justice in California has undergone a variety of reforms in the past decade. These reforms have led to a lower population and an increase in the number of vacant beds in juvenile facilities. CSAC will work with stakeholders to look at long term solutions for utilization of these vacant beds and work to ensure that there is funding for these alternatives.

GOVERNANCE

Local Governance and Land Use Authority

From county governance and contracting, to housing development, fire safety and the siting of county facilities, the state has increasingly been interested in revisiting the power of communities to make their own decisions. CSAC will advocate for the appropriate balance between statewide concerns and local authority. For county governance decisions, such as the makeup of the Board of Supervisors and other county offices, the full authority should remain at the community level. For other decisions, such as fire safety and housing development, the state's reasonable interests must be appropriately balanced with local circumstances.

Protect County Realignment Funding

Through a series of realignments over the past forty years, the state has shifted program responsibility for a number of health, human service, and public safety programs to counties, along with revenue sources designed to generally pay for the cost of those services. CSAC will work with county affiliates to protect revenues that pay for realigned county programs and spend considerable time educating policy-makers about the fiscal state of counties and the effects of further revenue erosion.

Elections, Redistricting, and Special Elections

In the last two years, the state has provided much needed funding for election equipment, using some of that funding to incentivize counties to move to the vote center model. CSAC will continue to advocate for additional state funding to help counties prepare for the 2020 elections, prevent threats from outside actors, reimburse counties for recent special elections, and ensure all voters have the opportunity to have their vote counted.

Public Records Act

The California Public Records Act is an important tool to ensure that the state and local government decision-making processes are transparent to the people they serve. However, over the decades since its enactment it has become a tangle of rules that invite abuse and inflate the costs of compliance. Counties will work with transparency advocates, local agencies, and others to change the system in a way that retains the law's features without exposing government entities to unnecessary liability, frivolous litigation, or burdensome workloads.