

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE

Jasmeet Bains, Chair

AB 2037 (Patterson) – As Amended April 9, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program (Pilot Program)

**SUMMARY:** Establishes the Pilot Program to be administered by the California Department of Aging (CDA) through the specified area agencies on aging (AAA), Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Pilot Program in:
  - a) AAA Area 4 a nonprofit joint powers authority serving Nevada, Placer, Sacramento, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba Counties; and,
  - b) AAA Area 29 a county run AAA serving El Dorado County.
- 2) Awards grants based on specific criteria to older adults and people with disabilities to mitigate against wildfires on properties they own that they would not otherwise be able to protect using existing resources.
- 3) Requires the designated AAAs to award grants on a competitive basis.
- 4) Requires applications to contain specified information including proof of need.
- 5) Authorizes the grant funding to be used towards costs associated with hiring contractors or other qualified service providers to perform wildfire mitigation activities.
- 6) Requires the AAAs to retain specified information and report the information to CDA upon the completion of the Pilot Program, including the number of applicants and the amount distributed.
- 7) Makes an appropriation therefor.
- 8) Repeals the provisions on January 1, 2030.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes, in federal law, the Older Americans Act (OAA), which promotes the well-being of Americans 60 years old and above through services and programs designed to meet their needs. (*42 United States Code (USC.) § 3001, et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes the Mello-Granlund Older Californians Act (Act), which establishes CDA, and sets forth its duties and powers, including, among other things, entering into a contract for the development of information and materials to educate Californians on the concept of “aging in place.” (*WIC § 9100 et seq.*)
- 3) Under the Act, requires CDA to designate various private nonprofit or public agencies as AAAs to work within a planning and service area and provide a broad array of social and nutritional services.

- 4) Under the Act directs the CDA's mission to provide leadership to AAAs to develop systems of home and community-based services that maintain individuals in their own homes or least restrictive homelike environments.
- 5) Defines "older individual" or "elderly" as a person 60 years of age or older, except where this provision is inconsistent with federal requirements. (*WIC § 9018*)
- 6) Requires the Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, in coordination with the Director of CDA, to lead the development and implementation of the MPA established pursuant to Executive Order N-14-19. (*WIC § 9850*)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill has not yet been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

**COMMENTS:**

**Author's Statement:** "Wildfires continue to plague California. In the midst of this crisis, it is imperative that the state help the most vulnerable, specifically older adults and individuals with disabilities, to prepare for these wildfires. Mitigation measures have been shown to have an immense benefit not only for the homes that use them, but even for entire neighborhoods. However, our most vulnerable communities are also least able to mitigate for wildfires on their properties. By providing a grant program, AB 2037 ensures older adults and individuals with disabilities can prepare their properties for fires, helping to protect them and their communities from the devastating effects of these disasters."

**BACKGROUND**

**Aging in California:** A recent compiled data report by the Public Policy Institute of California titled "California's Aging Population" states:

By 2040, California's older adult population (aged 65 and over) is projected to increase by a remarkable 59 percent, from 5.7 million to just over 9 million. This growth stands in stark contrast to the projected changes in other age groups. The working-age population (20–64 years old) is expected to increase only 3 percent, while the population under age 20 is anticipated to decrease by 23 percent. California is projected to have 3.4 million more older adults aged 65 and over, and 1.7 million fewer residents less than 65 years old.

This disproportionate growth in the older population will lead to a significant shift in the state's age structure. Almost one-quarter of Californians (22%) will be age 65 or older by 2040, a substantial increase from 14 percent in 2020. The old-age dependency ratio (the number of older adults per 100 adults of working ages) is projected to grow from 24 to 38. In other words, there will be 38 older adults for every 100 working adults in the state.

The most dramatic growth is projected among the oldest age groups—or the oldest old. The population aged 80 and over is expected to more than double, increasing by nearly 1.8 million in 2040. This rapid growth in the oldest age groups, driven by both the aging of the baby boomers and increases in longevity,

is especially significant because of this group's relatively high personal care and health care needs.<sup>1</sup>

Life expectancy continues to rise,<sup>2</sup> however during 2019-2021 overall life expectancy for Californians fell from 81.4 years to 78.4 years. For Hispanics, life expectancy declined by nearly 6 years, a difference three times greater than their white counterparts. And the difference between those in California's highest and lowest income brackets increased by three-and-a-half years to greater than 15 years (11.5 years before the pandemic to more than 15 years in 2021).<sup>3</sup>

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a brief (and traumatic) deviation from the long-term pattern of increases in life expectancy. The latest estimates suggest that life expectancy has resumed its pre-pandemic trend of gradually increasing longevity. The Department of Finance projects moderate increases in life expectancies through 2060.<sup>4</sup>

A report the State Auditor from 2019, "California Is Not Adequately Prepared to Protect Its Most Vulnerable Residents From Natural Disasters"<sup>5</sup> cites the three counties audited had not met the needs of vulnerable populations in their emergency planning. As California recovers from the most devastating fires in our history, we know the data shows older adults and people with disabilities perish in higher numbers during disasters.<sup>6</sup>

As floods, earthquakes and wildfires, as well as other natural disasters continue to plague California from coasts to deserts and north to south, we continue to identify how well we provide services to older adults.

In recent years, California has experienced an increase in the frequency and severity of wildfires, and experts project that these events will continue to occur more frequently.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the state will likely need to protect its residents more often and from more dangerous natural disasters in the future than it has in the past.

A scholarly article from the National Institute of Health (NIH) reports on the social vulnerability of the people exposed to wildfires in U.S. West Coast states<sup>8</sup> The report used an index from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assess the social vulnerability of populations exposed to wildfire from 2000–2021 in California, Oregon, and Washington, which accounted for 90% of exposures in the western United States. The results emphasize the importance of integrating the vulnerability of at-risk populations in wildfire mitigation and adaptation plans.

CDA administers programs serving older adults through contracts with local agencies in 33 locations across the state which provide a wide array of services on a community level to seniors and adults with disabilities. AAAs are designated to address the needs and concerns of older adults at the regional and local level. Each county is required to have an AAA to ensure all communities have access to local aging programs and provide information and services for older

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-aging-population/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://longevity.stanford.edu/the-new-map-of-life-initiative/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/covid-life-expectancy-drops-by-race-and-income>

<sup>4</sup> [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db492.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db492.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://information.auditor.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2019-103.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/statistics/deaths-injuries/older-adults.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://wildfiretaskforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10511185/pdf/sciadv.adh4615.pdf?utm\\_source=consensus](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10511185/pdf/sciadv.adh4615.pdf?utm_source=consensus)

adults. While California is home to 58 counties, not all counties have a stand-alone AAA. Some AAAs represent multiple counties to serve the region.

California's Aging Network (CAN) consists of CDA and the 33 AAAs. It is a greater than 50 year-old network. In 2022, the "California 2030" program was launched to develop tactics and strategies to prepare CAN for the future. California 2030 report was published in 2024 with recommendations for CAN. This report laid out the eight traits of an ideal future-ready CAN. Some of the traits associated with AB 2307 include:

- ***Inclusive and Equitable:*** It addresses ageism, ableism, racism, and implicit biases. Manages resources and programs to meet Californians' evolving needs, ensuring equitable distribution and reach across populations and rural and isolated geographies.
- ***Locally Responsive:*** It adapts and develops services, practices, and programs to address community-specific needs and opportunities.

***Master Plan for Aging:*** In January of 2021, the Governor released his Master Plan for Aging (MPA). The MPA prioritizes the health and well-being of older Californians and the need for policies that promote healthy aging. The MPA serves as a blueprint for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California's leadership in aging, disability, and equity.

The work plan laid out in the MPA mid-way through its ten year timeline continues to highlight the urgent needs facing California's older adults, people with disabilities, their families, caregivers, advocates and the workforce supporting these populations..

The MPA for 2025-26 outlines five bold goals and currently seeks to advance 81 initiatives to build a California for All Ages by 2030. Each initiative features a designated area of focus; to deliver, to analyze and to communicate. It also includes a Data Dashboard on Aging to measure progress.<sup>9</sup>

- Goal One: Housing for All Ages and Stages
- Goal Two: Health Reimagined
- Goal Three: Inclusion and Equity, Not Isolation
- Goal Four: Caregiving That Works
- Goal Five: Affording Aging

***Argument in Support:*** California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs) and the Fire Districts Association of California (FDAC), write in support "Wildfires disproportionately impact seniors and individuals with disabilities, particularly those living in moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones. Many of these residents lack the physical or financial capacity to complete critical mitigation work such as vegetation management, defensible space creation, debris removal, or basic home hardening."

***Argument in Opposition:*** None.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov/DashBoard/>

**Committee amendments:** The committee suggests clarifying amendments and including Area Agency on Aging Area 33 serving Kern County to be included in the Pilot Program.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

Alzheimer's Los Angeles  
Alzheimer's Orange County  
Alzheimer's San Diego  
American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)  
California Elder Justice Coalition  
California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs)  
California Foundation for Independent Living  
California Senior Legislature  
Fire Districts Association of California  
Placer County Board of Supervisors

**Opposition**

None on file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Elizabeth Fuller / AGING & L.T.C. / (916) 319-3990