
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2037
Author: Patterson
Version: May 18, 2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Heather Hopkins
Hearing Date: June 29, 2026
Fiscal: Yes

Subject: Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program

SUMMARY

This bill would establish the Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program to be administered by the California Department of Aging (CDA) through Planning and Service Areas 4, 29, and 33, with grants awarded by area agencies on aging (AAA), to help older adults and individuals with disabilities mitigate against wildfires on their property.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the Mello-Granlund Older Californians Act, which establishes the California Department of Aging, and sets forth its duties and powers. (*Welfare and Institutions Code [WIC] 9100 et seq.*)
- 2) Establishes an Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) program to provide information to consumers and their families on available long-term services and supports programs and to assist older adults, caregivers, and persons with disabilities in accessing long-term services and support programs at the local level through Aging and Disability Resource Connection programs operated jointly by area agencies on aging (AAA) and Independent Living Centers (ILC). (*WIC 9120*)
- 3) Provides that AAAs and ILCs shall be the core local partners in developing ADRC programs. Requires CDA to assist interested and qualified AAAs and ILCs in completing an application to be designated as an ADRC program. (*WIC 9120*)
- 4) Provides that an ADRC program operated by an AAA and an ILC shall provide all the following:
 - a. Enhanced information and referral services and other assistance at hours that are convenient for the public.

- b. Options counseling concerning available long-term services and supports programs and public and private benefits programs.
 - c. Short-term service coordination.
 - d. Transition services from hospitals to home and from skilled nursing facilities to the community. (*WIC 9120*)
- 5) Provides that an ADRC program operated by an AAA and an ILC shall do both of the following:
 - a. Provide services within the geographic area served.
 - b. Provide information to the public about the services provided by the program. (*WIC 9120*)
- 6) Provides that CDA, in consultation with the ADRC Advisory Committee within CDA, shall develop the core model of Aging and Disability Resource Connection best practices. These best practices shall be implemented by July 1, 2022, by all Aging and Disability Resource Connection programs operated by area agencies on aging and ILCs. To the extent feasible, the best practices shall be considered in the development and continued updating of the master plan on aging. In the development of these best practices, the department and advisory committee shall consider, at a minimum, the following practices:
 - a. A person-centered counseling process.
 - b. Public outreach and coordination with key referral sources, including, but not limited to, caregiver resource centers, the medical centers of the United States Department of Veteran Affairs, acute care systems, local 211 programs, local multipurpose senior service programs, Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), adult day care services, and long-term services and supports providers.
 - c. A formal follow-up procedure to ensure that services for which a person received a referral were received and methods for correcting the service provision, if needed.
 - d. A model for the best ways for area agencies on aging and ILCs to share necessary data and client information.
 - e. A model for the collection and reporting of data to the CDA, which shall include, but not be limited to, the demographic information for each individual counseled, the number of consumers served by category of service, and the number of caregivers served. (*WIC 9120*)
- 7) Provides that CDA shall review implementation of the ADRC Infrastructure Grants Program for consideration in developing and updating the best practices model. (*WIC 9120*)

This Bill:

- 1) Makes legislative findings and declarations that fires in California have caused untold harm and suffering and are especially dangerous to seniors and those with disabilities.
- 2) Establishes the Wildlife Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program whose purpose is to allow seniors and individuals with disabilities to take actions to mitigate against wildfires on properties they own that they would not otherwise be able to take with existing resources.
- 3) Provides that this pilot program shall be administered by CDA through the Planning and Service areas 4, 29, and 33.
- 4) Provides that AAAs shall award grants on a competitive basis and an applicant is eligible for a grant if all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. The applicant is an older adult or individual with a disability.
 - b. The applicant occupies the property as a primary residence.
 - c. The applicant owns or lawfully occupies the property.
 - d. The property is in a designated moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity zone under the CalFire Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps.
- 5) Requires an application include, at minimum, all of the following:
 - a. Verification that an individual is 65 years of age or older or has a specified disability.
 - b. Identification of the property and its wildfire risk designation under the CalFire Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps.
 - c. A description of proposed mitigation measures.
 - d. Proof of need, which may be satisfied with proof of income.
- 6) Provides that services provided pursuant to this pilot program may include, but are not limited to, costs associated with hiring contractors or other qualified service providers to perform wildfire mitigation activities. Grant funding may be used to support any of the following:
 - a. Vegetation management and defensible space creation.
 - b. Tree trimming or removal of hazardous or dead trees.
 - c. Removal and lawful disposal of combustible debris from roofs, gutters, and areas adjacent to structures.

- d. Installation of ember-resistant vents or other exterior hardening measures.
- 7) Provides that the AAA shall retain the following information, as available, and upon completion of the pilot program, shall report to DCA all of the following:
 - a. The number of applicants.
 - b. The amount of money distributed.
 - c. The mitigation measures proposed as necessary by the applicant.
- 8) Provides that this pilot program shall be implemented only upon an appropriation by the Legislature for these purposes.
- 9) Provides that this pilot program shall sunset January 1, 2030.

FISCAL IMPACT

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

This bill appropriates \$1 million from the General Fund (GF) to CDA to implement the three-year pilot program in three AAAs. Anticipated costs for the program include both grant funding and administrative costs to CDA to implement and manage the program. The bill does not specify if the appropriation is to cover both.

For implementation, CDA estimates GF costs of \$626,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28, and \$476,000 in FY 2028-29 and FY 2029-30. These costs include (a) one-time first year costs of \$150,000 to conduct targeted educational outreach to inform eligible individuals regarding the availability of the pilot program, and application procedures, and (b) ongoing costs of \$476,000 annually for the duration of the pilot for three additional CDA staff to develop, lead, and manage the proposed pilot program, in consultation with the AAAs. Although the pilot program ends on January 1, 2030, CDA anticipates the need to maintain the identified staffing until the end of FY 2029-30 to successfully wind down the program.

CDA estimated the above costs prior to Area 33 (Kern County) being added to the bill. An updated cost estimate may be slightly higher.

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, the General Fund faces a structural deficit in the tens of billions of dollars over the next several fiscal years.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, "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.”

Aging Californians

California is projected to be home to 10.8 million people age 60 and older by 2030. This is nearly twice as many people age 60 and older as there were in 2010. Additionally, by 2030 one out of every four Californians will be older adults. The state is making efforts to meet the needs of this growing population. In January 2021, the Newsom Administration published its Master Plan for Aging, which is intended to be a ten-year 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 five goals of the Master Plan are: housing for all ages and stages; health reimaged; inclusion and equity, not isolation; caregiving that works; and affording aging.

California Department of Aging (CDA)

CDA administers programs that serve older adults and adults with disabilities throughout the State. These programs are funded through the federal Older Americans Act, the Older Californians Act, and through the Medi-Cal program. CDA contracts with the network of 33 AAAs who directly manage a wide array of federal and state-funded services that provide meals, help finding employment; supportive services to assist older individuals as well as younger adults with disabilities to live as independently as possible; promote healthy aging and community involvement; and support family members in their vital care giving role. CDA also contracts with 38 agencies that operate the Multipurpose Senior Services Program through the Medi-Cal home and community-based waiver for the elderly and certifies approximately 242 Adult Day Health Care Centers for participation in the Medi-Cal Community Based Adult Services Program.

Area Agencies on Aging

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 adults. Some AAAs serve multiple counties at once. AAAs are contracted by the CDA to operate within a Planning and Service Area, the Planning and Service Area can include multiple counties. For example, Planning and Service Area 2 serves Lassen, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou and Trinity counties. These AAAs provide a wide array of services on a community level to adults age 60 and over. AAA programs often include long-term care ombudsman services, nutrition services, caregiver support and respite, Medicare counseling, legal referrals, transportation, and case management.

Aging and Disability Resource Connections (ADRC)

Many communities currently have multiple agencies administering long-term services and supports and have complex, fragmented, and often duplicative intake, assessment, and eligibility functions. ADRCs are intended to act as a single coordinated system of information and access

for people seeking long-term services and support. The “No Wrong Door” system aims to lower the barriers that older Californians, people with disabilities, caregivers, and families face accessing the information and assistance needed to age well. ADRCs are partnerships between AAAs and ILCs. The establishment of a statewide ADRC program was a key recommendation from the Master Plan for Aging stakeholder committee.

Anyone, regardless of age, income, or disability, may receive ADRC services. ADRC services may include: enhanced information and referral services, such as comprehensive resource information, follow-ups, and “warm hand-off” referrals. It also includes options counseling, such as assisting in identifying goals and needs through person-centered counseling and coordinating access to public and private-funded long-term services and supports in the community; and short-term service coordination, including expedited access to services and supports for individuals at risk of institutionalization, generally for 90 days or less, until a longer-term plan is in place. Transition services are also available for people who are currently in a hospital, nursing facility, or other institution and wish to receive long-term services and supports at home or in a community-based setting.

Through existing local ADRC programs, older adults, people with disabilities, caregivers, and families in some communities can connect to and access multiple services in their community with a single phone call, online contact, and/or walk-in. With this person-centered care model, individuals initially meet with an ADRC navigator who seeks an individual’s needs, goals, and preferences and offers a choice of available options. The navigator/specialist then refers the individual to local programs in their area through warm handoffs and schedules regular follow-up sessions. The ADRC program enables older adults and people with disabilities to navigate and access aging and other programs that already exist in their communities, receive assistance understanding the service options, and have a person-centered professional customize a service plan specifically to meet their needs, goals, and preferences based on initial intake and ongoing follow-up sessions. The ADRC network is growing statewide. Currently, California has 27 ADRCs that serve 30 counties. In Fiscal Year 2024-25 there were 248,298 unduplicated ADRC consumers served across all 30 counties.

California Wildfire Mitigation Program

AB 38 (Woods, 2019) required California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to enter into a joint exercise of powers agreement to oversee the development of the California Wildfire Mitigation Program. Cal OES and CAL FIRE have developed a comprehensive wildfire mitigation program that focuses on cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting to create fire-resistant homes as well as defensible space and vegetation management activities. The primary goal of his program is to offer financial assistance to vulnerable populations in wildfire prone areas throughout California.

Areas to implement this program were chosen after Cal OES and CAL FIRE conducted a state-wide analysis of areas with high wildfire risk and high social vulnerability (residents over age 65, residents in poverty, residents with a disability, residents with limited English, and residents without a car) at the parcel and census-tract level. Fire risk, climate change, and census data were included in the analyses.

To qualify for the California Wildfire Mitigation Program you must: be the legal property owner in a participating area at the time of the application; be willing to participate in a home assessment to determine the measures which may be taken to safeguard your home; and be willing to sign a right of entry to your property and allow contractors to implement the defensible space and home hardening activities. Currently the California Wildfire Mitigation Program is being implemented in the following project areas:

- El Dorado County – Weber Creek: this program focuses on an area identified as high wildfire risk along the Weber Creek drainage, south of Placerville encompassing 525 homes
- Lake County – Kelseyville Riviera: this program includes approximately 1,500 homes that have been prequalified within a specified area, with the emphasis of the initiative on implementing targeted wildfire cluster resilience strategy
- San Diego County – Dulzura, Campo, and Potrero: the program has begun in Dulzura and Potrero, with the Campo program beginning soon
- Shasta County – Whitmore, Lakehead, and Oak Run: the Shasta Fire Safe Council describes the initiative as focusing on communities with high social vulnerability and provides financial assistance for home hardening activities to low- and moderate-income households.
- Siskiyou County – Mt. Shasta: the goal is to complete defensible space work on approximately 500 homes
- Tuolumne County – Ponderosa Hills, Mira Monte, and Sunrise Subdivisions: there are 398 parcels in this project

This bill would create a separate wildfire mitigation program - Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program to be administered by the California Department of Aging through Planning and Service Areas 4, 29, and 33 to assist older adults and individuals with disabilities to mitigate against wildfires on their property. Planning and Service Area 4 covers Sacramento, Nevada, Placer, Sierra, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba counties, Planning and Service Area 29 covers El Dorado County and Planning and Service Area 33 covers Kern County.

Related/Prior Legislation:

SB 837 (Reyes, 2026) requires ADRC programs to provide disaster and emergency preparedness training specifically designed to help older adults and people with disabilities prepare for emergencies and ensure their safety before, during, and after natural disasters and other emergency events. This bill requires that the training utilize existing emergency preparedness and response tools developed by the Cal OES, CDA, the Department of Rehabilitation, and other relevant community partners. This bill requires that the training raise awareness of existing resources and guidance. This bill is currently pending in the Assembly.

AB 1069 (Bains, Chapter 445, Statutes of 2025) requires as part of disaster planning and response, an AAA, ILC, or an ADRC program have access to an emergency shelter in order to ensure older adults and persons with disabilities receive continuous services and necessary support.

COMMENTS

Recent fires in California have highlighted the need to improve disaster and emergency response and evacuation plans for the elderly for those with disabilities. The median age of those killed in the 2025 Los Angeles fires was 77 and at least one-third had mobility impairments. This bill seeks to address this issue by creating a Wildfire Mitigation Aging and Disability Grant Pilot Program to be administered by the CDA through Planning and Service Areas 4, 29, and 33. This program appears duplicative of the existing California Wildfire Mitigation Program, which offers financial assistance to vulnerable populations in wildfire prone areas throughout California. The California Wildfire Mitigation Program chose areas to implement the program after a state-wide analysis of areas with high wildfire risk and high social vulnerability – including residents over 65 and residents with a disability. Given that CalOES and Cal Fire have an already established infrastructure for reviewing and approving grants, the author may wish to consider administering this pilot grant program through the existing California Wildfire Mitigation Program. Further, the author may wish to narrow the eligible criteria to very high and high fire risk to maximize the impact of grant dollars.

PRIOR VOTES

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| Assembly Floor: | 75 - 0 |
| Assembly Appropriations Committee: | 15 - 0 |
| Assembly Aging and Long Term Care Committee: | 6 - 0 |

POSITIONS

Support:

- AARP
- California Fire Chiefs Association
- California Foundation for Independent Living Centers
- City of Thousand Oaks
- Fire Districts Association of California

Oppose:

None received

-- END --