
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SR 104
Author: Becker
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Urgency: No
Consultant: Heather Hopkins
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Fiscal: No

Subject: Aging and chronic disease policy

SUMMARY

This resolution encourages California's support for investments in healthy aging and longevity research, innovation, and public health strategies.

ABSTRACT

Existing Law:

- 1) Establishes the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman under the California Department of Aging (CDA) for the purpose of protecting and advocating for the rights and health and safety of long-term care facility residents, and providing leadership, direction, and support to local Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs. (*WIC 9700 et seq.*)
- 2) Requires the Secretary of California Health and Human Services Agency, in coordination with the Director of CDA, to lead the development and implementation of the Master Plan for Aging established pursuant to Executive Order N-14-19. (*WIC 9850*)

This Bill:

- 1) States that aging is the primary driver of chronic diseases that impair and kill millions of Americans each year and an overwhelming majority of Americans die of chronic diseases, typically after years of suffering and large expenditures of health care resources, which are driven by the underlying process of biological aging.
- 2) States that the risk of developing chronic diseases rises exponentially with age, making chronological age the primary risk factor for the top nine causes of nonaccidental death in the United States.
- 3) States that during the past century, the average lifespan in the United States increased by more than 30 years due in large part to advances in medical care and technology, yet our health span, meaning the amount of time we live free of disease, has risen modestly, and as a result, although we are living longer, we spend more years, and a growing proportion

of our lives, in poor health, with the average American living 15 years with one or more serious illnesses.

- 4) States that our current paradigm of chronic medical care is unsustainable because it focuses on mitigating the progression of individual chronic diseases after they have arisen with far less effort devoted to effectively curing or preventing these illnesses, which leads to escalating health care costs, impaired quality of life for patients, and increased use of health care resources.
- 5) States that aging itself has long been considered inevitable and unalterable, and this assumption is reflected in our national and state funding priorities, with a disproportionately small share of biomedical research dedicated to the study of aging biology.
- 6) States that California is home to a globally recognized biotechnology and life sciences industry dedicated to developing therapeutics to target the root causes of aging and chronic disease and promoting the development and use of longevity medicines and interventions has the potential to improve individual health and autonomy, reduce health care costs, and generate substantial social and economic gains for California residents.
- 7) States that the Senate supports targeting the biological processes of aging as a strategy to prevent or delay the onset of chronic disease.
- 8) States that California should invest in research grants, public-private partnerships, and regulatory frameworks that support the development of therapies that slow, prevent, or reverse aspects of biological aging.
- 9) States that the California Department of Public Health and CDA are encouraged to incorporate the science of aging into chronic disease prevention and healthy aging strategies, including education, outreach, and demonstration programs.
- 10) States that the Senate encourages collaboration between California's academic research institutions, health plans, and biotechnology firms to pilot innovative aging interventions that improve health span and reduce long-term care costs.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Purpose of the Bill:

According to the author, "SR 104 recognizes that aging is one of the leading drivers of chronic disease and supports a stronger public health focus on healthy aging and longevity. Californians are living longer, but many spend their later years managing serious conditions such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. These diseases reduce quality of life and place major strain on families, caregivers, and the healthcare system.

"This resolution encourages California to build on its leadership in biotechnology, medical research, and public health innovation by supporting research and strategies that target the biological processes of aging. By advancing healthy aging science, California can help delay or

prevent chronic disease, improve health outcomes, reduce long-term healthcare costs, and extend the number of years Californians can live in good health.”

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 reimagined; inclusion and equity, not isolation; caregiving that works; and affording aging.

Aging and Chronic Disease

Chronic disease, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and others, is the leading cause of death in the United States. Risks for developing these conditions increase with age. Not only are these chronic diseases a leading cause of death, they also contribute to prolonged illness, reduced quality of life, and rising healthcare costs. These prolonged illnesses contribute to the difference in lifespan and healthspan. Lifespan measures the time a person lives, while the concept of healthspan is the number of years a person remains free from significant disease or illness. Existing healthcare strategies largely focus on managing individual chronic diseases rather than addressing aging as an underlying factor that contributes to multiple diseases. While California has strong biotechnology, medical research, and public health infrastructure, there is currently no coordinated statewide effort to prioritize aging research and prevention as a core public health strategy.

Biotechnology in California

California is home to a pioneering biotechnology industry. While South San Francisco may be called the Birthplace of Biotechnology, the biotechnology industry thrives across California from San Diego to the Silicon Valley. California also ranks number one for National Institute of Health funding, boasting 40% of U.S. life science patents in 2023, and \$34.1 billion in venture capital raised in 2023. The life sciences industry directly employs almost half a million workers in California and generates over \$400 billion in annual economic output.

COMMENTS

This resolution seeks to encourage investment in research that reverses aspects of biological aging and collaboration between California’s academic research institutions, health plans and biotechnology firms. Given California’s history of biotechnology innovation, and it being home to top research institutions and hospitals, these investments could yield groundbreaking discoveries. Such discoveries would not only be cost-saving, but life-saving, improve the quality of life, and the healthspan of Californians. This is especially important in the face of the population changes in California where we are projected to be home to 10.8 million people age 60 and older by 2030.

POSITIONS

Support:

California Chronic Care Coalition
California Life Sciences
California State Retirees

Oppose:

None received

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