

CALIFORNIA COMMISSION ON AGING

Now is Time to Reframe Longevity

Welcome to the Age of Longevity. “The world is experiencing an unprecedented increase in average life expectancy and population aging, described as a revolution in longevity,” explained Robert M. Butler, M.D., author of *The Longevity Revolution*. “In the twentieth century, the industrialized world gained some 30 additional years of life, greater than had been attained during the preceding 5,000 years of human history ...” This *longevity dividend* presents our civilization with historic opportunities as well as with inevitable and unpredictable challenges.

The next generation of older adults will make up 25 percent of the population. In just a few years there will be more people 65 and older than 15 and younger. By 2050 the number of people living beyond 85 will have increased by 61 percent. This dramatic demographic shift will have substantial implications on our society, economy, healthcare, workforce and culture.

The California Commission on Aging is the state-mandated voice for older adults. We work directly with state and federal agencies, service providers and the public. Our role is to research, inform and advocate policies, programs and public education with a goal to ensure healthy, secure and purposeful longevity for *all* individuals.

A Commission priority is to help disadvantaged and at-risk older adults, whose human and financial resources decline as health issues and other challenges arise. Current data from UCLA’s Center for Health Policy Research shows the income of more than 40 percent of older Californians falls below the Elder Economic Security Index, which jeopardizes their ability to afford basic living expenses. The Commission strives to fortify services and supports for these economically and socially vulnerable individuals. Among the critical concerns are poverty, accessible healthcare, affordable housing, food security, elder justice, cultural diversity and rural outreach.

In a broader context, the Commission promotes transformative strategies to advance *age-advantaged* communities, caregiver support, social connectivity, workforce *repurposing* and encore careers, gerontology education and intergenerational relations, among others. These endeavors gain strength in resources and reach through the Commission’s ability to build coalitions and partnerships with state leaders in healthcare, higher education, technology, entertainment, and nonprofit organizations. Additional support is generated by active involvement with traditional and social media.

To most effectively communicate with its varied audiences, the Commission is participating in a national project to *reframe* language and messaging on aging; notably to improve the resonance of knowledge shared between older adults, experts in the field and policymakers. The unprecedented project was launched in 2015 by the FrameWorks Institute and is sponsored by top U.S. organizations representing aging issues. Expect new communication to use storytelling, real-life examples and *explanatory metaphors* to give context to aging-related research, statistics and jargon.

Moving forward, the California Commission on Aging will continue to *reframe* the challenges of aging as opportunities and actively pursue the bold vision for everyone to age well into the future.

Prepared by Commissioner Stuart Greenbaum, 1-10-17

Approved by CCoA 1-11-17