

Date of Hearing: July 3, 2019

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

David Chiu, Chair

SB 280 (Jackson) – As Amended June 13, 2019

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: Older adults and persons with disabilities: fall prevention

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to investigate possible changes to building standards that promote aging in place and establishes the Dignity at Home and Fall Prevention Act under the Department of Aging (CDA) to facilitate “aging in place.” Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the HCD to, at the next triennial building standards rulemaking cycle that commences after January 1, 2020, to explore revisions to residential building standards code that promote aging in place design.
- 2) Repeals obsolete code section references.
- 3) Establishes the Dignity at Home and Fall Prevention Program at the Department of Aging to provide grants to area agencies on aging for injury prevention information, education, and services to enable older adults and persons with disabilities to live independently in the home environment for as long as possible.
- 4) Directs agencies receiving funds to provide information on injury prevention, home environmental assessments, and requires grantees to partner with local agencies that have expertise in injury prevention services.
- 5) Requires the grant program to provide funding for injury prevention services, equipment, materials, and costs of labor.
- 6) Defines eligibility for equipment and services to be limited to older adults and persons with disabilities who meet both of the following requirements:
 - a) The older adult or person with a disability has an adjusted household income that does not exceed 80 percent of the area median income.
 - b) The older adult or person with a disability has fallen, is at risk for falling, or is at risk for institutionalization, and is otherwise unable to afford the equipment or services to be provided by the program.
- 7) Requires the CDA to consult with experts including the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence at the University of Southern California, local fall prevention coalitions, and local public health agencies.
- 8) Requires the CDA to establish a grant application form and selection methodology.
- 9) Requires each applicant to submit a plan and details for how the area agency on aging will provide injury prevention education, assessment services, equipment, and activities in an

effective and cost-appropriate manner. The plan shall include information about the number of clients and type of service.

- 10) Requires each grantee to submit a report to the CDA and to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of each house of the Legislature that includes the specific performance measures as provided. The report must include information of barriers encountered and level of administrative funding used.
- 11) Specifies that funding for grants is contingent on funding in the budget, and caps the grant funding per agency at \$150,000.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) within the Department of General Services, and requires any building standards adopted or proposed by state agencies to be submitted to, and approved by, the CBSC prior to codification into the California Building Standards Code.
- 2) Requires HCD to propose the adoption, amendment, or repeal of building standards to the CBSC and to adopt, amend, and repeal other rules and regulations to protect the health, safety, and welfare of occupants and to the public.
- 3) Establishes the Senior Housing Information and Support Center within CDA, which provides and distributes information for seniors and their families with respect to available innovative resources and senior services.
- 4) Supports the concept of “aging in place” by providing funding for education and home improvements while making recommendations for changes in home modification policies and providing information on the benefits on home modification for this concept.
- 5) Establishes the Program for Injury Prevention in the Home Environment under CDA, which provides grants to local entities for injury prevention information and education programs and services to increase the awareness and prevention of injuries.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the Bill: According to the author, “For many of our seniors and others at risk of falling who are on reduced or fixed incomes, simple home improvements to make their homes safer could mean the difference between being in their own homes and having to seek institutional care. Under SB 280 the Department of Aging would contract with Area Agencies on Aging to provide injury prevention information, education and services for the purpose of enabling older adults and persons with disabilities to live independently in the home environment for as long as possible. In addition under SB 280 the Building Standards Commission is asked to develop building standards that take mobility into account – for example, ground-level entries, wide interior doors and space for maneuverability. With these simple modifications and changes to how homes are constructed, seniors and others with mobility challenges will be better able to age in place and remain independent.”

Background: California's population of people over the age of 65 is expected to increase about 50 percent from 2020 to 2030, growing from nearly 6 million people to 9 million people. This group's share of the state's population is growing as well, from approximately 15 percent of Californians to nearly 20 percent. The number of seniors who are divorced or never married is expected to increase commensurately, as is the percent without children. These projections indicate that older adults will be more likely to live alone.

Fall Prevention Building Standards: According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), three million older people are treated for injuries related to falls in emergency departments across the country every year. Many elders who fall without being injured become afraid of falling again, this fear causes them to become less active, which leads to them become weaker and therefore increase their chances of falling once again. According to multiple research studies, some major risk factors for falling include lower body weakness, difficulties with walking and balance, medications that affect balance, vision, and hazards such as broken or uneven steps and rugs or clutter that the individual can trip over. Adequate lighting in the home, adding grab bars inside and outside the tub or shower and next to the toilet, as well as having railings on both sides of stairs have been proven to significantly reduce the chances of falling.

This bill proposes to investigate possible changes to building standards that will allow elders to remain in their homes and will further California's efforts to promote aging in place. This bill would require HCD to investigate building standards that facilitate aging in place before proposing these standards for CBSC to consider. By investigating these standards, HCD can more efficiently develop standards that will work for all of California.

Fall Prevention Programs: The Senior Housing Information and Support Center and the Program for Injury Prevention were funded from Fiscal Year 2000-01 to Fiscal Year 2001-02. However, the funding was eliminated in December 2002 during the state's energy crisis. Both programs continue to exist in statute under the Older California's Act as unfunded programs. This bill would repeal those statutes, as neither of these programs has been operational since 2003, due to lack of funding.

This bill would replace those programs with a new more-focused Dignity at Home and Fall Prevention Program through which CDA would provide grants to area agencies on aging for injury prevention information, education, and services for the purpose of enabling qualified low-income older adults and persons with disabilities to live independently in the home environment for as long as possible. The grant funds would be used for injury prevention needs, including injury prevention equipment, services, materials, and labor costs for homeowners and renters meeting income requirements.

Additionally, to provide oversight of the new grant program, area agencies on aging that receive grants would be required to submit a report to CDA and to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of each house of the Legislature that includes the specific performance measures. The report is also required to include information on the administrative costs incurred by the agency in carrying out the program and any barriers to service that the agency encountered, as specified.

Related Legislation:

SB 1026 (Jackson) (2018): Similarly to this bill, would have repealed obsolete statutes that establish programs CDA and instead establishes the Dignity at Home and Fall Prevention Program, which requires CDA to provide grants to AAAs for injury prevention services, as specified. The bill did not pass out of the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

SB 24X (Committee on Budget), Chapter 24, Statutes of 2003: Provided that the Senior Housing Information and Support Center would be implemented only to the extent that funds for these purposes are appropriated by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act or other statute.

SB 370 (Ortiz), Chapter 689, Statutes of 2001: Established the Program for Injury Prevention in the Home Environment to award grants to eligible local level entities for injury prevention information and educational programs and services.

SB 1846 (Lowenthal), Chapter 797, Statutes of 2000: Established the Senior Housing Information and Support Center within CDA for the purpose of providing information and training relating to specified subjects, including housing options and home modification alternatives designed to support independent living, and available innovative resources and senior services.

Double referred: This bill is double referred. It was heard in the Assembly Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care on June 25, 2019 and passed on a vote of 7-0.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California Senior Legislature (Sponsor)
Alameda County Board of Supervisors
California Association for Health Services At Home
California Association of Area Agencies on Aging
California Association of Public Authorities for IHSS
County of Santa Clara
County Welfare Directors Association of California
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Professional Fiduciary Association of California
San Diego County

Opposition

None on file

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