

## EDITORIAL: Restore funding for seniors

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Ailing senior citizens and those who care for them need your help.

As part of last summer's budget "solution," the state is poised to eliminate \$76-a-day Medi-Cal payments to seniors who use local Adult Day Health Centers. Many of the roughly 300 centers around the state, including one in Poway, face the real possibility of having to close their doors next month unless the payments are reinstated or a replacement program is instituted.

The Poway center, open since 2002, serves 120 clients from Poway, Rancho Bernardo, Rancho Penasquitos and Scripps Ranch. For the seniors and their families, along with younger adults with disabilities, the center is a welcome oasis providing a full range of medical, nursing, therapeutic, rehabilitative and social services. Seniors eat meals at these centers, get physical therapy and other treatments, and keep up their social lives, with transportation to and from home for those who have no ride.

Center director Kathryn Holt says only 15 or so of the families have told her they are able to pay out of pocket for regular use of the center. Other clients may need to cut back on how often they come or stop attending altogether.

Eliminating the Medi-Cal payments is projected to save the state \$169 million annually. However, if Adult Day Health Care is eliminated, many of the frail clients will end up in state-supported institutions, at five times the cost to taxpayers, Holt says.

Adult Day Health Care advocates are hoping for a favorable decision in federal court in Oakland, where a judge is considering a legal challenge to maintain state funding and keep the centers open. A decision is due next Tuesday. If the court rules against the ADHCs, the only course left will be to lobby state lawmakers to reinstate the funds.

That's where readers can help. Write, call or email Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher and state Senator Joel Anderson. (Their addresses are below.) Tell them that local seniors should not be the innocent victims of the political process and demand that Medi-Cal payments be reinstated.