

Don't shut senior health centers

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By IFEANYI ALOZIE

A friend of mine recently argued that an accurate measure of a society's wealth is how well that society treats its citizens, especially its most vulnerable and marginalized members.

Watching the present political warfare in Sacramento and Washington, D.C., over budget deficits, I must sorrowfully admit that my friend was right.

In both Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to balance the books, our politicians have moved to cut vital programs such as those meant to help elderly and disabled Americans.

Gov. Jerry Brown's recent budget proposal epitomizes our politicians' nonchalant approach to matters that are critically important to the elderly and disabled.

To save a few dollars, Gov. Brown has called for eliminating Adult Day Health Care as a Medi-Cal benefit. Adult Day Health Care Centers are licensed facilities that offer patients an organized daily program of health, social and therapeutic services.

These centers hire trained professionals such as nurses, clinicians, social workers, drug and alcohol counselors, speech therapists, nutritionists, teachers, occupational therapists, physical therapists and others in order to meet the needs of their patients.

These centers have helped to decrease hospitalization of patients and reduce overcrowding of our state's emergency rooms. They also help the growth of local businesses.

How? They allow caregivers to work while the centers take care of their loved ones. Elimination of these centers will cause families to become unpaid caregivers or to send their love ones to nursing homes.

This will cause huge financial hardships for our state and family members.

The important role that these centers play in keeping our seniors healthy and saving taxpayer money cannot be overemphasized.

According to estimates by the California Association of Adult Day Services, the elimination of these centers will cost California taxpayers \$51 million more than their elimination would save.

Please tell Brown and our state politicians that our seniors deserve better.

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