

April 29, 2014

The Honorable Jack Kingston
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee
States Senate
20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor-HHS-Education
Appropriations Committee United
United States Senate Washington, DC
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Kingston, Chairman Harkin, Rep. DeLauro, and Senator Moran:

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (Consumer Voice) urges you to support funding for the President's FY 2015 budget request of \$25 million for the Elder Justice Initiative. Consumer Voice is a national non-profit organization that advocates with and on behalf of long-term care consumers across care settings. Our membership consists primarily of consumers of long-term care and services, their families, long-term care ombudsmen, individual advocates, and citizen advocacy groups. The Consumer Voice has almost 40 years experience advocating for quality care.

There are currently 5 million elder abuse victims in America, and for every case that is reported, 24 go unreported. An astounding one in two individuals with dementia are victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation. Estimated losses to older victims of financial exploitation are \$2.9 billion per year, and the direct medical costs associated with elder abuse exceed \$5 billion. The human cost in both physical and emotional pain and suffering can never be measured.

Adult Protective Services, the only agency statutorily authorized to help the elderly and disabled, lacks reliable data and guidance on conducting case investigations. A recent survey of Adult Protective Services programs around the country found that the majority of programs need resources for data collection, more collaboration, research and technical assistance.

The Elder Justice Initiative proposed in the President's budget addresses these issues. The Initiative includes \$13.8 million in funding for Adult Protective Services and will help create an APS National Data System and technical assistance as well as national demonstration grants to both enhance data systems

and develop program standards and evaluation. It will also provide \$11.2 million for research, including research on elder abuse screening, and will establish a better knowledge base about elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. This research is needed in order to establish credible benchmarks for elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation prevention as well as program development and evaluation.

In 2010, Congress enacted the Elder Justice Act to initiate a coordinated and comprehensive response to elder abuse. In passing this law, Congress signaled its recognition that elder abuse is a growing problem. Four years later no funding has been appropriated to put this law into action, despite the fact that available data from state Adult Protective Services (APS) agencies show an increasing trend in the reporting of elder abuse, a trend that available evidence suggests will continue.

Most of your constituents who are victims of elder abuse are dependent on others and cannot call you or write to you to ask for help, but we can. On behalf of the ever increasing numbers of older adults who are abused and neglected every day in the United States, the Consumer Voice asks you to make Elder Justice a higher priority for our nation by supporting the President's budget request.

Sincerely,

Richard Gelula, MSW
Executive Director

The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.

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