

The Elder Justice Coalition

A National Advocacy Voice for Elder Justice in America
John B. Breau, Honorary Chair • Robert B. Blancato, National Coordinator

November 12, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Blunt and Ranking Members Mikulski and Murray:

On behalf of the 3000 member bipartisan Elder Justice Coalition, we are writing to urge that three specific funding levels related to elder abuse prevention be supported in any final Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill for FY 2016. We urge support of the full \$25 million contained in the President's budget for the Elder Justice Initiative, the existing funding level of \$1.7 billion for the Social Services Block Grant for FY 2016, and that you support an additional \$5 million authorized under the Elder Justice Act for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which was previously requested by the President.

The problem of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation is growing while the federal response is not. One estimate is that less than two percent of all federal funds expended on abuse go to fight elder abuse. To date, a full five years after the passage of the bipartisan Elder Justice Act, the Act has only received \$4 million in appropriations, a funding level which was not achieved until FY 2015. While we are pleased to see both the House and Senate Labor-HHS proposed bills include last year's \$4 million spending level, we know the need is far greater. The adoption of the bipartisan budget agreement provides for additional spending in each of the next two fiscal years. We contend that programs that focus on prevention warrant greater investment and funds for elder abuse prevention must be included in that category.

The Elder Justice Initiative is a small but important start. As proposed in the President's budget, the funding would support a critical element of a long overdue need in the field of elder abuse—improved data collection through unified Adult Protective Services (APS) databases, a key finding of a GAO report. Funds would be used for demonstration grants to enhance these State APS Data Systems (\$15 million), Operation, Maintenance and Technical Assistance (\$3 million), and enhancing APS services generally (\$3.25 million). Finally, another \$3 million is requested to address another important need: to support research grants that will increase the evidence base of screening for elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. The \$5 million for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program would be used for both direct services for prevention of abuse in long-term care facilities

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and much needed training. Money from the Social Services Block Grant funds APS in general—it is the only source of federal funding for APS—and also provides funding for crucial services for victims of elder abuse.

The Elder Justice Coalition has worked with Congress on a bipartisan basis over the past decade on the issue of elder abuse. This is an extremely pivotal moment in the effort. This \$25 million for the Elder Justice Initiative is vital as are maintaining funding for the Social Services Block Grant and providing more resources for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program.. We note that the current funding level of \$1.7 billion for the Social Services Block Grant is included in both House and Senate Labor-HHS bills for FY 2016. All three are essential to begin to better address elder abuse in America. They are investments in protecting our most vulnerable older adults from the ravages of elder abuse.

We urge your support and appreciate your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Blancato
National Coordinator
Elder Justice Coalition

cc: Rep. Hal Rogers
Rep. Nita Lowey
Rep. Tom Cole
Rep. Rosa DeLauro