

March 18, 2015

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To: Co-Chairs Senator Shields and Representative Williamson and members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

Re: Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor Funding (Oregon Department of Justice)

The Alzheimer's Association supports the Oregon Department of Justice's proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor. The request is just a small part of the Oregon Department of Justice's budget. We urge your support and "aye" vote.

Funding the proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor is important and necessary, particularly for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias (over 59,000 Oregonians age 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's disease, a number expected to rise to 84,000 by 2025.ⁱ) Every year, an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation.ⁱⁱ In Oregon, nearly 30,000 reports of potential abuse were made in 2013. And that's only part of the picture; one study estimated only one in 14 cases of elder abuse ever come to the attention of authorities.ⁱⁱⁱ


People with dementia are especially vulnerable to elder abuse because the disease may prevent them from reporting the abuse or even recognizing it. They also may fall prey to strangers who take advantage of their cognitive impairment. Oregon has specific laws that criminalize the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults, as well as general laws that criminalize acts constituting elder abuse (e.g., murder, sexual assault, battery, theft and fraud).

Unfortunately, the dynamics of elder abuse create multiple challenges for prosecutors. A 2010 study found 47 percent of participants with dementia had been mistreated by their caregivers.^{iv} Most cases involve the victimization of older adults by perpetrators with whom they have an ongoing and trusting relationship; because they so often trust and depend on the perpetrator, victims may be slow to recognize and report abuse — and they may be reluctant or unable to cooperate with criminal justice professionals.

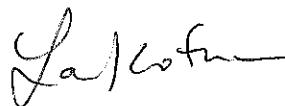
We support this funding because we are hopeful an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor will provide the support necessary to prosecutors, law-enforcement officials and community partners to improve the prosecution of these challenging cases. Please vote "aye" to funding the proposal to create an Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor.

Thank you for your attention to this very important issue. If you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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ⁱ Alzheimer's Association Oregon Chapter (2015). Public policy priorities 2015. Retrieved from:

http://act.alz.org/site/PageNavigator/OR_OR_action_center.html?_ga=1.92017690.1211898857.1412364916

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014, December 31). Administration on aging: Protect seniors in the year of elder abuse prevention. Retrieved from

http://www.aoa.acl.gov/AoA_Programs/Elder_Rights/YEAP/index.aspx

ⁱⁱⁱ National Research Council. (2003) Elder mistreatment: Abuse, neglect and exploitation in an aging America. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

^{iv} Wiglesworth A, Mosqueda L, Mulnard R, Liao S, Gibbs L, & Fitzgerald W. (2010). Screening for abuse and neglect of people with dementia. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.58(3), 493-500.