

March 27, 2015



Ways and Means Sub-Committee On Public Safety  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Honorable Chairs Williamson and Shields and members of the Joint Ways and Means Sub-Committee on Public Safety,

I am writing, on behalf of Elders in Action, to support the proposal of an Elders Abuse Resource Prosecutor. Elders in Action is a non-profit organization that advocates for and provides meaningful community engagement for older adults in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties. Through our Personal Advocate program we respond to 250-300 calls from older adults each month and generally about one quarter of these are from people who have experienced some form of elder abuse, neglect or exploitation. Often the abuse is by a family member or close family friend.

One of our callers was a grandmother who called us asking for financial assistance. In the course of talking with her about potential resources available to her, it became clear that her situation was the result of allowing her grandson, recently out of prison, to live with her. While living with her he had racked up \$800.00 in cable bills and she had paid that bill at the expense of her rent. As a result, she could not pay her rent and had been issued an eviction notice. She also revealed to us that there was a restraining order in place against him and that he was staying with her in contravention of this order. In her mind she was his last chance and she would not call police fearing he would be rearrested. She was sacrificing her own precarious well-being for her grandson.

This case is representative of the reluctance of many victims to report or recognize the abuse or to cooperate with those attempting to assist them.

In January of 2013, Elders in Action placed two volunteers in the Elder Crime Unit of the City of Portland. These volunteers provide support for individuals who have been victimized but who cannot otherwise be helped by the criminal justice system. Our volunteers report that there is a great need for additional training, technical assistance and outreach regarding elder abuse laws as well as the development of strategies for prevention and detection. With the expected doubling of the older adult population in the next 15 years, elder abuse is certain to increase.

Resource Prosecutors have been successful in Oregon in the areas of domestic violence and DUI prosecution, prevention and detection. Using this successful model, an Elder Abuse Prosecutor would work with prosecutors, law enforcement and community partners to provide: site and topic

specific trainings; technical assistance upon request to prosecutors throughout the state; and serve as a liaison between the Oregon Department of Justice, state and local government entities and community and advocacy groups.

Elders in Action wholeheartedly supports this proposal and urges this committee's endorsement.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Bernstein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Barbara Bernstein  
Interim Executive Director