



**Written Testimony in Support of
Statewide Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor and two Investigators in Attorney General Office
Joint Committee On Ways and Means, Sub-Committee on Capitol Construction
SB 5701
Department of Justice Budget
February 24, 2016**

Co-Chairs Read and Girod, and members of the Sub- Committee,

My name is Andrea Ogston, I am an attorney at Legal Aid Services of Oregon. I specialize in the practice of elder law. On behalf of Legal Aid Services of Oregon, thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of the creation of a Statewide Elder Abuse Resource Prosecutor and two investigators in the Attorney General Office.

The mission of Legal Aid Services of Oregon is to achieve justice for low-income vulnerable populations, and for many years, we have served an increasing number of vulnerable older adults who have been the victim of elder abuse. Elder abuse is a broad term, encompassing domestic violence in later life, financial exploitation, self-neglect, and sexual abuse of older adults. Elder abuse seriously endangers the safety, health, financial independence, and dignity of its victims. These are serious public health and safety issues in our state. Victims of elder abuse are twice as likely to die within one year of the abuse being reported than those elders who have not been the victim of abuse.¹

We are committed to and applaud Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum's ongoing efforts to improve the coordinated community and system response necessary to help prevent the exploitation of seniors. The creation of a Statewide Elder Abuse Prosecutor position would allow Oregon to develop uniform procedures and multi-disciplinary resources to bring to justice those that would misuse their position of trust to escape punishment. Two investigators are necessary for the prosecutor to operate effectively.

Elder abuse prosecution adds a layer of complexity due to the frequency with which the crime has been perpetrated by someone the senior trusts. Creating a specialized resource position staffed by an expert who understands the dynamics of shame and dependence that can arise in this area will be instrumental in both holding individuals accountable and ensuring that senior victims of crimes feel supported and empowered to participate in the judicial system. Successful prosecution of these cases requires thoughtful attention to the dynamics of these complex relationships and the needs that the older adult may have if they lose the support that had been previously provided by the person who is also exploiting them.

In closing, these positions would allow Oregon to take an important step forward in addressing an increasingly urgent problem in our community. For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support for the creation of this position.

Sincerely,

Andrea N. Ogston

¹ XinQi Dong, M.D., associate professor, medicine, Rush University Medical Center, Chicago; Karin Ouchida, M.D., assistant professor, medicine, Montefiore Medical Center, and medical director, Montefiore Medical Center Home Health Agency, New York City; Aug. 5, 2009, *Journal of the American Medical Association*