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Chairman Kingston, Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of the Elder Justice Coalition, a bipartisan 3000 member organization, we thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Department of Health and Human Services' proposed Elder Justice Initiative in the amount of \$25 million.

My topic has been and must always be a bipartisan issue: preventing elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Today, we ask this Subcommittee to provide the necessary funding in a bipartisan fashion as part of the solution to the national disgrace of elder abuse.

Elder abuse in America is real.

There are more than six million victims of elder abuse, or roughly one of every ten persons over 60. Victims of elder financial abuse lose an estimated \$2.9 billion a year which can include entire life savings. Other data points to a 16% increase in reported cases. However, a New York State study said for every elder abuse case known to agencies, twenty-four were unknown.

We strongly support the \$25 million requested in the President's FY 2015 budget for an Elder Justice Initiative. This proposed funding level, if approved by Congress, would be the first direct appropriation for the bipartisan Elder Justice Act sponsored in the House by Congressman Peter King.

The funding request includes:

- \$13.8 million for Adult Protective Services, including an APS National Data System and Technical Assistance and national demonstration grants to both enhance APS data systems and development of program standards;
- \$1.2 million for a national evaluation of Adult Protective Services;
- And, \$10 million for research including elder abuse screening and to establish a better knowledge base about elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

We support the emphasis placed on data collection. The lack of good data has hurt the elder abuse field and our ability to target efforts to prevent abuse. Data often drives dollars. For elder abuse to compete effectively for resources, we must have a good system to collect and analyze data. This appropriation will also help assess who are the most likely perpetrators and victims and direct resources to those who are most vulnerable.

We support the development of APS program standards. Interventions for victims of elder abuse are far more complicated than for younger victims of abuse and family violence. To be effective, APS programs must have consistency and quality on a national basis. Elder abuse is happening in all states and districts and in some cases an older person can be victimized in more than one state.

This initial investment of \$25 million will allow existing federal resources to be used more efficiently while also responding to elder abuse with a systematic approach. A more coordinated use of other federal funds for elder abuse prevention and slowing future victimization is a solid return on investment.

Why else is this an investment? According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, the direct medical costs associated with elder abuse now exceed \$5 billion. Victims often end up having to turn to other federal programs, especially Medicare and Medicaid, and for financial abuse victims they may require other assistance including income support. Some of this can clearly be avoided and savings achieved for these programs if we make this investment today.

Elder abuse victims are household names like Mickey Rooney or the late Brooke Astor. We testify for them today but also for those who are not household names. The voices we don't hear are the ones who need a voice that you can listen to today.

I said that elder justice is a bipartisan issue. Leaders have included Senator Hatch, Representative King, as well as former Senator Lincoln and Representative Emanuel to name a few. Again on a bipartisan basis this Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act. The reality is that elder abuse is a women's issue. The average victim is an older woman living alone between 75 and 80. In fact, many are so vulnerable to abuse with the Census reporting that almost 50 percent of all women now live alone. We must act now to get resources into elder abuse prevention.

If one in ten seniors in your District were victims of crime, you would likely respond by seeking more support for law enforcement as first responders in the fight against crime. Elder abuse hits one out of every ten seniors. Let us give needed support to Adult Protective Services who are the first responders for elder abuse.

Our Coalition also supports funding the Social Services Block Grant at the level proposed in the President's budget, the only funding source for Adult Protective Services today.

Today we ask for at least \$25 million for elder justice, just as 40 years ago witnesses came to this Subcommittee seeking initial funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974. What is common? A victim of child abuse, like a victim of elder abuse, is never the same. The role of government should always be to help the vulnerable of all ages.

Elder justice warrants considerably more than the requested \$25 million. The Elder Justice Act deals even more comprehensively with elder abuse with increased support for long term care ombudsmen assisting nursing home residents to funding forensic centers important to the prosecution of abusers. Since these are not included, please view the \$25 million as a floor to build on, not a ceiling. We look forward to working with you on ensuring that this first time appropriations for elder justice provides us with the best possible value and positive outcomes.