



**Erin Pettegrew,**  
Acting State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

House Aging and Long Term Care Committee  
Sub. S.B. 158: Elder Fraud and Financial Exploitation  
Written Proponent Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Arndt, Vice Chair Pelanda, Ranking Member Howse and members of the Aging and Long Term Care Committee. As the Acting State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, I support the efforts to address financial exploitation of Ohio's seniors and am grateful to Senator Wilson for his leadership in bringing Sub. S.B. 158 to the committee's attention and to you for your consideration. Please accept my written testimony in favor of this legislation.

Long-term care ombudsmen seek to address complaints related to quality of care offered to consumers both in and out of institutions. Most often, complaints come to our twelve regional programs through calls from family members or directly from consumers who speak to one of our staff ombudsman or the 200 volunteers who visit nursing homes, residential care facilities and group homes regularly. Sometimes, however, concerns come to us directly from provider staff.

Financial exploitation may be brought to our attention by provider staff seeking payment of patient liability, the patient's responsibility of their medical expenses. Over the course of just a few months of irresponsible or fraudulent activity by a loved one, a resident can rack up thousands of dollars in unpaid medical services leading a provider to seek discharge of the resident for non-payment. Upon investigation, we may find that a spouse, child or power of attorney hasn't been paying the resident's patient liability and suspect that they are diverting the funds to their own use. In such cases, provider staff must report the liability as theft and we work together to protect the resident's interests while law enforcement investigates the crime.

Sub. S.B. 158 would support consumers and protect their ability to maintain their health care and quality of life. The expansion of mandatory reporters adds to the eyes and ears watching for potential fraud and exploitation. The restitution required in the bill would go a long way toward making residents whole after such a violation of their trust.

Financial exploitation is a complex crime to investigate, requiring time-intensive review of banking and other records. Fines collected and distributed to the county departments of job and family services to support investigation of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation is an elegant way to not only punish the offenders but also protect potential victims in the future.

I'm sorry I could not be with you today. Please let me know if the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman can be of assistance to you or your constituents in the future.

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