



Ohio House Aging and Long Term Care Committee

Chairman Arndt

Vice Chair Pelanda

Ranking Member Howse

Brie Lusheck

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The Center for Community Solutions

Proponent Testimony on Senate Bill 158

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To Chairman Arndt, Vice Chairwoman Pelanda, Ranking Member Howse and all of the members of the Ohio House Aging and Long Term Care Committee, thank you for having me here today. My name is Brie Lusheck and I am a Policy Associate at The Center for Community Solutions, a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to improve health, social and economic conditions through research, policy analysis and communication.

One of Community Solutions' policy priorities is advancing the safety, health, and economic wellbeing of older adults, the reforms made in Senate Bill 158 are important steps in achieving this goal. Community Solutions offers testimony today to highlight the devastation of financial exploitation for older Ohioans and how the efforts in this bill will continue the state's hard work in advancing efforts to protect older adults.

It is estimated that for every report of elder abuse or fraud 23 remain veiled.¹ Expanding mandatory reporters, as this bill does, will provide more opportunities to protect older adults. For example, investment advisors may see the exploitation of their client firsthand and will now have the tools to prevent financial exploitation from occurring.

¹ Lifespan of Greater Rochester, Inc., Weill Cornell Medical Center of Cornell University, & New York City Department for the Aging. (2011). Under the Radar: New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study. Self reported prevalence and documented case surveys [Final Report]. Retrieved March 24, 2014, from <http://www.lifespan-roch.org/documents/UndertheRadar051211.pdf>; Acierno, R., Hernandez, M. A., Amstadter, A. B., Resnick, H. S., Steve, K., Muzzy, W., & Kilpatrick, D. J. (2010). Prevalence and correlates of emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse and potential neglect in the United States: The National Elder Mistreatment Study. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(2), 292-297. The New York State prevalence study found rates of about 7.6% (p. 32), whereas the Acierno study found rates between 11 and 14%. (p. 294). Thus, this report uses "about one in ten."

Victims of elder abuse are four times more likely to be admitted to a nursing home and three times more likely to be admitted to a hospital.² Increasing the penalties for theft if the victim is an elderly person and investing those collected funds back into the state for additional resources and supports will provide further safeguards against the unnecessary disturbance that results in hospital and nursing home admittances.

Research shows that successfully preventing elder abuse can save victims and families from undue trauma, while also saving state resources that could be quickly exhausted by such cases. Senate Bill 158's provision that the Ohio Attorney General's office distribute at least six public awareness publications each year will provide communities throughout Ohio and individuals with the tools they need to spot the warning signs of fraud or financial exploitation and equip them with the resources they need to report such instances to stop further damage to the lives of older Ohioans.

In addition, we would like to extend our support for an amendment that would add additional members to the Elder Abuse Commission. We have been actively working with this Commission, including chairing the Public Policy Committee, but were not codified as members, in addition to others who work on the Commission. The Elder Abuse Commission provides a vital opportunity for stakeholders to collaborate across sectors to provide education, boost research, and raise awareness of elder abuse. We look forward to continuing this work as an "organization representing the policy interest of seniors."

Community Solutions appreciates this committee and Senator Wilson's continuous work to prevent elder fraud and lessen the damage in individual's lives adding to current Ohio criminal enhancements against all seniors. We would welcome the chance to share additional research that we have conducted in this policy space, and are happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time. Thank you to the committee for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony today.

² Connolly, Marie-Therese, JD, Bonnie Brandl, MSW, Risa Breckman, LCSW, 2014. The Elder Justice Roadmap. Accessed November 2017. A stakeholder Initiative to respond to an Emerging Health, Justice, Financial and Social Crisis. <https://www.justice.gov/file/852856/download>