

March 20, 2018

The Honorable Erin Davis, Chair
House Children and Seniors Committee – 9:00 a.m., Room 218N
Florence Deeter - Committee Assistant - Room 151S

Reference: SB 311 – Mandatory Reporters of Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation

Good morning Madam Chair and Committee Members. My name is Ernest Kutzley and I am the Advocacy Director for AARP Kansas. AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization with a more than 315,000 members living in Kansas. AARP is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all as we age. Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony *in support of* Senate Bill 311.

Elder abuse, like many other forms of domestic abuse, is often a hidden phenomenon that affects at least hundreds of thousands of older Americans. Elder abuse can be physical, financial, or psychological. It may take place at home or an institutional setting.

Estimates of elder abuse vary greatly, and it is often underreported. A 2011 New York State study estimated that over the course of one year, 76 of every 1,000 people age 60 and older had been abused. The study's incidence rate was found to be almost 24 times greater than the number of cases reported to relevant authorities

Detecting and preventing elder abuse involves increasing awareness among the general public, financial institutions, and professionals. Banks are often the first to notice elder financial exploitation and may be in a position to prevent it. In-home services, such as Meals on Wheels or home health care, are significant in preventing and treating abuse of frail older adults. Beyond the services essential to daily life, a broad range of protective services are needed, ranging from simple assistance with household chores to help with money management and outright guardianship. Community-based programs, which provide services such as counseling, information and referrals, and personal money management, can help prevent and stop abuse.

Multidisciplinary teams of professionals can address elder abuse issues that cannot be effectively resolved by workers in a single field. For example, teams of accountants, banking professionals, and attorneys can address financial abuse, while teams that include law enforcement, medical examiners, attorneys, and others can conduct retrospective reviews of deaths resulting from elder abuse.

AARP supports state efforts to establish a multidisciplinary approach to combatting abuse and exploitation. States and local area agencies should develop public awareness programs and home- and community-based services to help prevent, identify, and address cases of elder abuse and to instruct the public how and where to report elder abuse. This should include training of professionals from a variety of disciplines to improve detection, investigation, and enforcement regarding cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Therefore, AARP Kansas supports SB 311. We respectfully request the committee's support of this bill.

Thank you.