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SCR-45 Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month. (2021-2022)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 45

CHAPTER 100

Relative to Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 20, 2021.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 45, Dodd. Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

This measure would proclaim and acknowledge the month of June 2021 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in California and would reiterate the importance of annually recognizing Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in the state.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult abuse is a serious and growing crisis in California; and

WHEREAS, Not a day goes by without reports of horrific cases of abuse or exploitation of the elderly or adults with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the United States, 10,000 people a day are turning 65 years of age; and

WHEREAS, One in every nine individuals over 65 years of age is living with Alzheimer's dementia and nearly one in two people with dementia experiences some form of abuse by others; and

WHEREAS, Alzheimer's and dementia deaths have increased by 16 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic and COVID-19 has extended the resources of nursing homes and long-term care facilities to their limits; and

WHEREAS, The incidence of abuse and exploitation of the developmentally disabled population is shocking. Over 80 percent of women with developmental disabilities and over 30 percent of men with developmental disabilities are sexually abused at least once during their lifetime; and

WHEREAS, Given that one in every 54 babies born today has a disorder on the autism spectrum, the rapid growth of special populations in need of enhanced protection will further challenge an overwhelmed patchwork of programs and services intended to protect dependent adult populations; and

WHEREAS, The elderly and adults with disabilities may be impacted by a constellation of physical, mental, pharmaceutical, or medical influences, any one of which could restrict their ability to protect themselves or self-advocate, to report to authorities when abuse occurs, or to testify against perpetrators; and

WHEREAS, The necessary care and equipment for individuals with a disability must be offered to provide the maximum autonomy, protection, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, Research by the National Institute of Justice found that 11 percent of older adults reported experiencing at least one form of mistreatment, including emotional, physical, or sexual mistreatment or neglect, in the past year; and

WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, or fiduciary and consists of crimes that recognize no boundaries of economic, educational, or social status, gender, race, culture, religion, or geographic location; and

WHEREAS, Subtle indicators that abuse may be occurring include bruises or pressure marks, unexplained withdrawal from normal activities, a change in alertness, unusual depression, sudden changes in financial situations, strained or tense relationships, or frequent arguments; and

WHEREAS, Recognizing these signs is the first step toward the prevention of elder and dependent adult abuse; and

WHEREAS, Elders who experience abuse or mistreatment face a greater risk of impacting the health system or impacting the social service system; and

WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult victims have a mortality rate three times that of the general public and are 300 percent more likely to die a premature death; and

WHEREAS, Current estimates suggest that as few as one in 14 cases of elder and dependent adult abuse is reported, including fewer than one in 25 incidents of financial abuse, because the victims are ashamed, hopeless, intimidated, or afraid of the perpetrator; and

WHEREAS, A comprehensive central data repository of all child abuse investigations has been in existence since 1965, but no similar repository exists for investigations of crimes against dependent, elderly, and other dependent adults; and

WHEREAS, Despite the rapidly expanding population of older adults and adults with disabilities, the State of California has only recently begun collecting comprehensive data on abuse cases, reports, or investigations, leaving the government with limited capacity to track existing trends and to make informed decisions about the strategic use of existing resources, let alone improve the reporting system, enhance protections, or give law enforcement partners the tools necessary to secure justice; and

WHEREAS, The lack of statewide elder and dependent adult abuse data prevents policymakers from measuring the extent of these crimes and tragedies; and

WHEREAS, All older adults and adults with disabilities have the right to live safely in the least restrictive environment, whether in their homes or health care facilities, and to enjoy an optimum quality of life while being protected from all forms of injustice; and

WHEREAS, Achieving health equity for older people of color and older LGBTQ individuals are important and continuing goals that must be priorities for our state; and

WHEREAS, Private citizens and public agencies must work to combat crime and violence against older adults and adults with disabilities through increased public awareness, knowing the signs of abuse, and reporting; and

WHEREAS, June 15 is recognized internationally as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, first established in 2006 to raise awareness of elder and dependent adult abuse and to promote better understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic issues behind the growing incidence of elder and dependent adult abuse around the globe; and

WHEREAS, All Californians are strongly encouraged to report suspected abuse of an elder or dependent adult by calling their local adult protective services agency, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, law enforcement, or emergency services agencies; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature proclaims and acknowledges the month of June 2021 as Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month and reiterates the importance of annually recognizing Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in the state; and be it further

Resolved, That California's recognition of elder and dependent adult abuse in June is consistent with the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day of June 15; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.