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SCR-64 Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month. (2023-2024)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 64

CHAPTER 116

Relative to Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 06, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 64, Dodd. Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

This measure would proclaim and acknowledge the month of June 2023 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, The population of Californians over 60 years of age is expected to increase 166 percent during the period from 2010 to 2060, inclusive, with more than one-half of the counties seeing a 100-percent increase in this age group; and

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

WHEREAS, It is estimated that only 1 in 24 incidents are reported and fewer than 15 percent of those harmed access formal support services each year; and

WHEREAS, Many victims of abuse fail to report out of fear of losing their relationships with those harming them, shame that someone they trust mistreated them, or distrust of the police and agencies charged to help them; and

WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, or financial. The abuse knows no boundaries with respect to the gender, race, culture, religion, geographic location, or economic, educational, or social status of the victim; and

WHEREAS, Financial abuse ranked first among the types of abuse reported to adult protective services during 2021–22, with nearly 51,000 reports received; and

WHEREAS, According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Internet Crime Complaint Center, over 92,000 victims above 60 years of age reported scam-related losses equaling \$1,700,000,000 in 2021, a 74-percent increase from 2020; and

WHEREAS, Barriers to accessing help include cognitive and communication impairments, literacy, lack of culturally specific services, and shame. Additionally, elders may distrust their ability to protect themselves, self-advocate, report to authorities when the abuse occurs, or to testify against perpetrators; and

WHEREAS, Factors that place older Californians at risk for abuse include cognitive and physical decline, dementia, isolation, and loneliness, as well as a lack of access to preventive services like estate planning, daily money management, affordable supported housing, and assistance with decisionmaking; and

WHEREAS, One in every nine individuals over 65 years of age is living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, 20 to 25 percent of the older adult population experience mild cognitive impairment, and one in two people with dementia experience some form of abuse by others; and

WHEREAS, During the COVID-19 pandemic, seniors experienced an increase in stress and isolation, both of which have been shown to be highly detrimental to health; and

WHEREAS, Abuse is most likely to occur to older adults who are isolated from their community. It has been well publicized that older adults are at the highest risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19, but they may also be at increased risk for negative consequences from the measures being enacted to protect them from the viral threat; 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 abuse 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, All older adults, including those with disabilities, have the right to live safely in the least restrictive environment, whether in their homes or in health care facilities, and enjoy an optimum quality of life while being protected from all forms of injustice; and

WHEREAS, California has only recently begun collecting comprehensive data on abuse cases, including reports and investigations. This leaves the government with not only a limited capacity to track existing trends and make informed decisions regarding the strategic use of existing resources, but a limited ability to improve the reporting system, enhance protections, or give law enforcement partners the tools necessary to secure justice; and

WHEREAS, Private citizens and public agencies must work to combat crime and violence against older adults and adults with disabilities by identifying and preventing the social isolation of elders, through the expansion and resourcing of home- and community-based long-term support and services programs, by increasing law enforcement, increasing public awareness, and expanding social service programs; and

WHEREAS, Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse Awareness Month in California aligns with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, first established in 2006 and observed on June 15 every year and created to promote a better understanding of the cultural, social, economic, and demographic issues associated with abuse around the globe; and

WHEREAS, On June 10, 2019, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order No. N-14-19, calling for the development of a 10-year Master Plan for Aging (MPA) to serve as a blueprint for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California's leadership in aging, disability, and equity; and

WHEREAS, Goal 3 of the MPA, "Inclusion and Equity, Not Isolation," calls for lifelong opportunities for older Californians and protection against isolation, discrimination, abuse, neglect, and exploitation; 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, local Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, 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 2023 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 the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.