

AOA Older American Act Reauthorization Hearings

Dallas, Texas

February, 2010

Secretary Greenlee, and participants

Greetings, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am Bettye Mitchell, of Tyler, Texas. I am the former Director of Adult Protective Services, and former Deputy Commissioner for the Texas Department of Human Services. I now serve as President of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, a partner in the National Center on Elder Abuse, administrated the Administration on Aging.

Secretary Greenlee, first let me thank you and your administration for the leadership you provide to abused elders and persons with disabilities through the work of the National Center on Elder Abuse. I particularly want to thank Stephanie Whittier, a member of your staff, for the her support to the National Center Partners, in the work protecting vulnerable adults, through outreach of local coalitions, research, program development, and education forums.

The Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act is critical to services provided to our Nation's treasured citizens, our seniors. Without these services more individuals would be in need of Adult Protective Services. The Older Americans Act is the safety net of the preventing many persons from falling prey to abuse, neglect or exploitation. I would like to ensure that AOA through the Older Americans Reauthorization Act:

- I. Strengthen the Title III-B of the legal services portion of the OAA providing an array of services providing access to APS clients. It is extremely important that APS clients have access to adequate legal services for prevention of elder abuse, empowering clients. An array of legal services or needed with the assistance of financial exploitation to guardianship, and denial of benefits, resources are spotty, underfunded,

and sometimes focuses on issues that are of less importance than aggressive advocacy and support to victim of abuse.

II. Enhance Title IV Training, Research, and Discretionary Projects and Programs, provide more funding, mandating greater working relationships of the aging network to more effectively work with Adult Protective Services Programs, and national leadership in the field of elder abuse prevention, elder rights, enhancing comprehensive training, and bringing research to practice.

III. Finally, Adult Protective Services needs a home. Our hopes have been hinging on the passage of the Elder Justice Act for coordination efforts and the development of leadership at the national level. Many of us have been working on these issues since the late 70's. States have done an amazing job in cobbling programs together without federal legislating mandating Adult Protective Services and with the guidance of the National Adult Protective Services Association and the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, and grants by National Center on Elder Abuse, and others. A survey conducted by National Adult Protective Services Association confirmed APS states programs have been cut by 13% with an annual increase in reports of abuse by 24%. In Texas, the Adult Protective Services Program investigation 89,000plus allegations of abuse, neglect, and exploitation confirming over 50,000 reports for fiscal year 2008. To support States programs, We need:

1. Federal Guidance
2. Appropriate Funding
3. Federal Legislation and funding mandating Adult Protective Services in States and Territories, mandated APS Programs including policies on investigations, service delivery, outreach, legal remedies, and prevention, quality assurance, guardianship, and core curriculum and basic and advanced training
4. Legislation and coordination between Federal agencies serving vulnerable adult populations and with mandates to the states

for coordinating resources, establishing regulations for prevention of elder abuse and abuse with persons with disabilities, working effectively together with other agencies with same service populations for the best array of services for adults who are victim of abuse, neglect and exploitation..., with priorities of service to abused population

5. Adult Protective Services for all ages, with definitions of eligible clients serving Adult population with no disparate treatment between elders and persons with disabilities
6. Establish Minimum standards/ outcomes
7. Establish a data collection system, require key data elements
8. Funding for research
9. Funding for development of best practice models example NCEA/NCPEA local coalitions
10. To ensure objective investigations and APS programs have a firewall between other service delivery systems with no entity impeding the investigation process
11. Establish a National Resource Center to provide technical assistance to states, developing minimal standard , policy, core competencies in training, and establishing the minimum data set collection requirements for states programs, enhancing outcomes for effective Adult Protective Service Programs

In closing, I am most appreciative of the founding organizations in the field of abuse of our nation's most vulnerable person, the work of the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, the nation's oldest multi-disciplinary team and its approach for the prevention of abuse, through research, education, and collaboration. We too, are thankful The National Adult Protective Services Association, in their work in supporting States and providing leadership for Adult Protective Services Programs.

We are indebted to the leadership of Bob Blancato and founding members of the Elder Justice Coalition in their persistence in seeking federal legislation for safety and protection of vulnerable adults. And last but not least, we are grateful to the

Administration on Aging for its leadership and vision in the creation of the National Center on Elder Abuse and the resources given to support research, education, program development, and local network building to protect and for for the prevention of abuse of our elders and adults with disabilities.

We are thankful to you, Assistant Secretary Greenlee for these hearings on the Older Americans Act and to the participants of these hearings. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Bettye M. Mitchell, MA

President

The National Committee for the

Prevention of Elder Abuse,

The Nations' Multi-Disciplinary Team