



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO FIGHTS ELDER ABUSE IN STATE BUDGET

SUSAN SERINO March 14, 2016

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### SERINO FIGHTS ELDER ABUSE IN STATE BUDGET

ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) is making an unprecedented push in the State Budget to combat one of our state’s most underreported crimes: elder abuse.

*“There are few things that make my blood boil more than the thought of vulnerable individuals being taken advantage of,” said Senator Serino. “Elder abuse is a particularly heinous crime and is an issue we all need to get angry about—it can happen to anyone, our neighbors, our parents and one day, even ourselves. It is time to put our seniors first, change the statistics and ensure that New Yorkers have the*

*opportunity to live out their Golden Years free from harm and safe from abuse.”*

Currently, NY dedicates less than \$1 million—statewide—for elder abuse services and prevention. With studies estimating that almost 300,000 cases go unreported each year, that is clearly not enough. Included in the Senate’s One-House Budget Proposal (S. 6407b), is funding for four bills championed by the Senator, who Chairs the Senate’s Aging Committee, with the potential to drastically reduce the instances of abuse.

The proposal aims to take a multi-pronged approach to combating elder abuse by first establishing a program that allows social services districts to develop multidisciplinary investigative teams for the purpose of investigating reports of suspected elder abuse or maltreatment.

In previous years, as part of the federal Elder Abuse Prevention Interventions grant initiative, two pilot programs were established in New York City and in the Finger Lakes in order to improve collaboration and awareness between systems to better investigate and intervene in cases of elder abuse and financial exploitation. Reports on the effectiveness of the program have proven the pilots incredibly successful, with the Finger Lakes program boasting over \$500,000 already having been directed by the courts to be repaid to victims of financial exploitation.

The One-House proposal aims to build on that success by expanding the program across New York State (S. 6922).

*“I have heard countless accounts of the ways in which the Multi-Disciplinary Teams have literally saved lives in Western New York and NYC,” said Senator Serino. “Establishing a network of agencies dedicated to preventing and halting abuse is key to turning the statistics on elder abuse around once and for all.”*

Further, the proposal (S. 6925) aims to engage trusted medical professionals to help identify and assist patients at a high risk for abuse. The bill directs the Commissioner of Health to establish protocol for elder abuse and maltreatment screening to aid physicians, physicians assistants and nurse practitioners in identifying and reporting cases of abuse.

*“Few people know our seniors better than the medical practitioners that they see on a regular basis,” Serino said. “By providing them the tools they need to better identify abuse and intervene on behalf of their patients, we can stop maltreatment in its tracks.”*

Additionally, the proposal includes the creation of a hotline for reporting of various forms of elder abuse (S. 6921). Specifically, the bill would require the Office of Children and Family Services, in conjunction with the Office for the Aging, the Department of Law, the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, the Division of Criminal Justice Services, and the New York state Department of Health, to create and establish a 24/7 interagency clearinghouse for the reporting of cases involving physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, active, passive or self neglect, and financial exploitation.

*“Far too often, I hear from people who simply do not know where to turn when it comes to reporting abuse,” Serino continued. “Whether it is the postal worker, the volunteer who delivers meals, neighbors, friends, or concerned family, everyone should have easy access to one hotline number that will allow them a direct route to report abuse so that intervention can happen without bureaucratic delay.”*

Importantly, the proposal would provide the funding necessary to allow the State Office for the Aging the ability to conduct a public education campaign to create awareness on the signs and symptoms of elder abuse (S. 6923).

*“When it comes to combating elder abuse, awareness is key,” Serino stated. “I think people often assume that issues like elder abuse are of a private, domestic nature to be worked out within a family. However, just like with domestic violence, too often victims do not have the opportunity to speak out or don’t know where to turn for help. As a society, we have a duty to ensure that we are looking out for those who cannot speak out on their own behalf. That starts with understanding what elder abuse is and where to turn to put a stop to it.”*

The Senate's One-House Budget proposal passed today. As budget negotiations progress, Senator Serino will continue to fight tirelessly to ensure that each of these measures is included in the final State Budget.