



CWDA

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September 20, 2006

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senate
SH-331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) supports the bipartisan Elder Justice Act (EJA) and asks that you co-sponsor the bill. The Act (S 2010) marks the first and only comprehensive federal effort to address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation. Among the bill's provisions, the EJA would authorize a dedicated federal funding stream for adult protective services (APS), establish technical assistance and provide federal coordination through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to assist state and county APS programs. The legislation would also authorize targeted demonstration grants to implement models to detect and prevent financial exploitation.

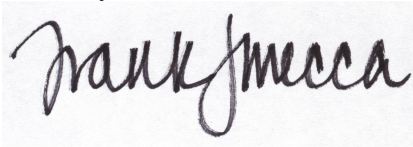
California is home to the nation's largest population of seniors. The state also has one of the most comprehensive programs in the nation for responding to reports of elder and dependent adult abuse and neglect. In 1999, California implemented statewide standards in its Adult Protective Services program, including a twenty-four hour, seven-day-a-week response system, and provided a significant investment of state funding to support these expanded and standardized efforts to combat elder and dependent adult abuse. Recognizing the devastation that can result from financial abuse and the need to intervene as early as possible before assets are completely depleted, California financial institutions will begin mandatory reporting of suspected financial abuse in January 2007. We believe that these combined efforts will help protect seniors and dependent adults.

California has engaged in extraordinary public education and outreach efforts to protect its seniors and dependent adults from abuse and neglect. This has led to increased reporting for abuse and neglect, including a 40% increase in "confirmed" and "inconclusive" reports between January 2004 and June 2006. Between January 2004 and June 2006 California's counties experienced an 18 percent growth in the number of active cases. Unfortunately, actual funding has remained flat and even eroded when considering the steadily increased cost of doing business. As a result, county APS agencies are dealing with increasing and more complex caseloads with fewer resources.

Federal support for local APS agencies as proposed in the EJA is timely and needed given the tremendous growth anticipated in the nation's elderly population and commensurate growth predicted for elder abuse and neglect. California also supports other provisions of the EJA that would assist local APS agencies to effectively serve this vulnerable population in collaboration with our local partners, including public health, behavioral health and sheriffs departments.

Thank you for your attention. If you have any questions about our support for the bill, please contact Tom Joseph, Director of CWDA's Washington Office at 202/898-1444.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank Mecca". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Frank Mecca
Executive Director