



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

AGING CHAIRS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER VETO OF ELDER ABUSE HOTLINE, VOW TO KEEP UP THE FIGHT

SUSAN SERINO December 1, 2017

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ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I—Hyde Park) and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (D – Binghamton), Chairs of the Legislature’s Aging Committees expressed their concern today for the safety of New York’s seniors following the Governor’s decision to veto their bill that would have created an elder abuse hotline to better protect vulnerable older New Yorkers.

Senator Sue Serino said, “While we certainly understand the realities of the fiscal constraints our state must exercise right now, elder abuse is an epidemic that has flown under the radar for far too long. A 24/7 hotline had the potential to exponentially increase reporting and change the way we protect vulnerable older New Yorkers. Last year, the Governor vowed to help safeguard older New Yorkers from exploitation and this system could have played a key role. I am not giving up on this fight and look forward to working with my colleagues and the Executive to ensure that this issue gets the attention it deserves in the upcoming budget.”

Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo said, “I join my colleague Senator Serino in expressing my disappointment that the Governor vetoed our bill to protect seniors by creating an elder abuse hotline. However, I’m encouraged that he indicated in his veto message that he is supportive of the initiative and is willing to work with us during the upcoming budget negotiations. We’ll need to get an accurate cost estimate as we move forward. Given how underreported this crime is, this will continue to be a top priority.”

In February of this year, the Aging Chairs joined forces to host a public hearing on elder abuse in New York to foster a better understanding of its prevalence here in the state and to bring to light methods to more effectively prevent mistreatment.

As has been previously noted by the chairs, because there is currently no uniform method of reporting and far too many cases are known to go unreported, the statistics on elder abuse vary widely. The NYS Office for the Aging, for example, estimates that for every one case of elder abuse, neglect, exploitation or self-neglect reported to authorities, five others go unreported. However, other organizations claim that the number of unreported cases could be upwards of 20 or more for each case actually reported. At the joint hearing, Gary Brown, Statewide Elder Abuse Coordinator for the Office of the Attorney General, testified—in reference to financial abuse in particular—and noted that only 1 in 44 cases of elder financial abuse are ever reported to authorities.

It was made clear at the hearing that more could, and should, be done to strengthen state laws to better protect vulnerable older New Yorkers and to increase reporting.

The bill (S. 2154-A/A. 8160) would have specifically addressed this issue by creating a 24/7 statewide hotline for the reporting of elder abuse. While the bill passed both houses of the Legislature unanimously before the end of this year's legislative session, it was vetoed by the Governor, who expressed support, but cited a lack of resources.

Both members have agreed to continue to make the issue a priority and work on viable solutions to increase reporting and prevent abuse in the coming Legislative Session.