

Testimony before the House Families, Children & Seniors Committee
Robert Fox, Delegate to the Michigan Senior Advocates Council
February 21, 2012

My name is Bob Fox and I am from Hartland, Michigan. I currently serve as a delegate to the statewide Michigan Senior Advocates Council, the Advisory Council of Elder Law of Michigan, and the Advisory Council of the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, which covers the southeast Michigan counties of Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, and Washtenaw. I also work directly with older adults as a volunteer with the Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program. Thank you for allowing me to speak briefly on the topic of elder abuse and financial exploitation. I feel fortunate to have the ability to come to Lansing and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

As you probably know, approximately 80,000 Michigan seniors fall victim to some form of abuse each year, physical, emotional, or financial. Seventy percent of abusers are “trusted” individuals including spouses, children, grandchildren and friends.

One example of this growing problem has been given to us from Oakland Family Services, which serves Oakland County. According to Micheline Sommers who is Director of Older Adult Services, they are seeing an increase in neglect and financial exploitation of their older clients. These older adults, who rely on their children to remain living independently, may not report their children to authorities out of fear they’ll lose the little support and care that they do receive. Ms. Sommers related the case of a client who is unable to get out of the house, so her son goes grocery shopping for her. But he uses her Bridge card for his own purchases, and she is then left inadequate resources for the month. The son also finds where she hides her medications and takes her Xanax for himself. Her doctor now limits her prescription to a few pills at a time and asks her to hide them.

The bills presented today can help these seniors who rely on others, their children, grandchildren, or hired caregivers to remain living independently and hold on to the life savings they’ve worked hard to accumulate. While some aging parents will not turn in their children or caregiver – no matter how severe the abuse or exploitation, we can take steps to protect them, and help them protect themselves. Again, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

Robert Fox
1342 Long Lake Drive
Brighton, MI 48114
(586) 946-5712