DATE

The Honorable Anthony Portantino

Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee

1020 N St., Room 2206

Sacramento, CA 95814

Re:  SB 440 (Pan) – Cognitive Impairment Safety Net System Task Force …SUPPORT

Dear Chairman Portantino:

[Organization name] is pleased to be part of a large coalition of organizations requesting your support for SB 440 (Pan), calling for the establishment of a Cognitive Impairment Safety Net System Task Force, a bill co-sponsored by the County Welfare Directors’ Association, the California Commission on Aging, and the California Elder Justice Coalition.  The growing numbers of cognitively impaired individuals in California and the limited array of services available to them makes this Task Force timely and critical.

California’s State plan for Alzheimer’s Disease projects a doubling in the number of individuals with Alzheimer’s disease by the year 2020, with the greatest impacts on communities of color and women. Chronic health conditions, substance abuse, traumatic brain injury and the growing numbers of older adults will continue to drive the numbers higher, while the service network for these individuals remains under-resourced and fragmented.

Adults with cognitive impairments are also at exceptionally high risk for elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation as evidenced by these shocking statistics:

* A study of 284 sexual abuse cases revealed that 60% of the elderly victims suffered from cognitive impairment or dementia (Burgess & Phillips, 2006)
* In a study of 481 primary family caregivers for older adults with dementia, 20.2% admitted that they had neglected the person they cared for (Lee & Kolomer, 2005)
* A study of 4,627 community-dwelling older adults with cognitive impairments found rates of self-neglect of 18.8% and 13.6% among men and women, respectively (Dong, Simon, Mosqueda, & Evans, 2012)
* In a study of 816 US households with care recipients who received long-term care services, 12.6% of those with cognitive problems had experienced elder abuse (Post, et al., 2010).

Adults with cognitive impairments are also at extremely high risk for rights denied, including the right to privacy and to live in minimally restrictive settings. These violations result from the shortage of advocates, including public and private guardians and conservators and interventions such as supported decision making or guardianships and conservatorships that are limited in duration and their scope of authority. Also lacking is adequate supervision and oversight of conservators.

To address these issues, we recommend that the Task Force:

* Include representative(s) from the field of elder abuse prevention, probate court personnel, providers of legal assistance to older adults, and the judiciary.
* Explore the need for stronger protections against abuse, neglect, and exploitation for adults with cognitive impairments.
* Explore the need for alternatives to conservatorship (e.g. supported decision-making), limited conservatorship, and enhanced monitoring of conservators.

Sincerely,

*Name*

*Title*

Cc: Senator Richard Pan

**References**

Burgess, A.W., Phillips, S.L. (2006). Sexual abuse, trauma, and dementia in the elderly: A retrospective study of 284 cases. *Victims & Offenders, 1*(2): 193–204.

California Health and Human Services Agency. (n.d.) California’s state plan for Alzheimer’s disease: An action plan for 2011-2021. Retrieved from <https://www.alz.org/national/documents/StatePlan-Calif.pdf>

Lee, M. & Kolomer, S.R. (2005). Caregiver burden, dementia, and elder abuse in South Korea. *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect, 17* (1): 61–74.

Dong, X., Simon, M.A., Mosqueda, L., & Evans, D.A. (2012). The prevalence of elder self-neglect in a community-dwelling population: Hoarding, hygiene, and environmental hazards. *Journal of Aging and Health,* *24* (3): 507–24.

Post, L., Page, C., Conner, T., Prokhorov, A., Fang, Y. & Biroscak, B.J. (2010). Elder abuse in long-term care: types, patterns, and risk factors. *Research on Aging, 32* (3): 323 – 48.