



**Disability and Guardianship Project**  
**Disability and Abuse Project**

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February 17, 2017

Hon. Charles Grassley  
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510-6050

Re: Protecting Victims of Elder and Dependent Adult Abuse  
Amendment to S. 178 – Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act

Dear Senator Grassley:

Thank you for introducing S. 178 – a bill authorizing the federal government to support the states in preventing elder abuse and exploitation and improving the justice system’s response to victims in elder abuse and exploitation cases. It is gratifying to see that the bill has bipartisan support from ranking member Dianne Feinstein and 12 other co-sponsors from both parties.

Throughout the bill, reference is made to “adult protective services” agencies in the states (APS). These agencies play a major role in receiving reports of elder abuse and investigating suspicious cases of elder abuse. But the scope of their services is not limited to people over the age of 60. As you can see from a [2013 National Survey](#) conducted by NAPSA (National Adult Protective Services Association), while the terminology may vary from state to state, all vulnerable adults including those between the ages of 18 and 59 come under the protective umbrella of APS agencies. State laws recognize that vulnerability to abuse and exploitation is a function of disability rather than age. It would be appropriate for S. 178 to recognize this fact by having it include all vulnerable adults.

The bill states that “the term ‘elder abuse’ includes abuse, neglect, and exploitation of an elder.” The scope of the bill could be broadened by adding “or any adult regardless of age who is included in the mandatory abuse reporting law of a state” after the words “elder abuse.” Language throughout the bill could refer to “elder and dependent adult abuse” rather than mentioning only “elder abuse.”

S. 178 provides an opportunity for the federal government to be pro-active in helping states fulfill their obligation to protect all adults with mental or physical conditions that make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The bill could easily be amended to accomplish this result. Including other vulnerable adults in S. 178 will not impose any additional financial burden on the states since APS and other state and local agencies already focus on elder and dependent adult abuse.

If we can be of any assistance on this matter, please have your staff contact us.

Respectfully submitted:

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