April 25, 2014

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Senator Moran:

I am writing on behalf of the American Bar Association to urge you to provide funding in FY 2015 for the Elder Justice Act, enacted into law in 2010 to provide resources to “prevent, detect, treat, understand, intervene in and, where appropriate, prosecute elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation.” Even though the Act was passed with bipartisan support, it has not received any funding to date.

The ABA, therefore, vigorously supports the Administration’s modest FY 2015 budget request for $25 million to fund programs authorized by the Elder Justice Act. Specifically, it would provide $13.8 million to strengthen Adult Protective Service programs in the states by creating an APS National Data System and providing grants to states to interface with the System.

It also would establish national demonstration grants to test a variety of methods to detect and prevent elder abuse. The remaining $11.2 million would be used for research to create credible benchmarks for elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation prevention, as well as program development and evaluation.

Elder Abuse in the United States is a problem that respects no boundaries. It is not defined by socio-economic, racial, or ethnic status, and it occurs with alarming frequency in your state as well as all others. According to the 2010 National Elder Mistreatment Study, an estimated five million elders are victims of abuse in America each year. That number may be only the tip of the iceberg, since a 2011 New York State Elder Abuse Prevalence Study found that for every case that is reported, 24 remain unreported. The MetLife Mature Market Institute 2011 study of
financial exploitation found that older victims lose an estimated $2.9 billion per year due to financial exploitation, and the direct medical costs associated with elder abuse have been estimated by researchers to exceed $5 billion annually.

Providing federal funding to better understand, treat, and combat elder abuse is an investment in the health, dignity, and economic future of our nation. We therefore urge you to include in the FY 2015 Labor-HHS Appropriations bill $25 million in funding for programs authorized by the Elder Justice Act.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies