November 12, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Harkin  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor-HHS-Education, and Related Agencies  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the American Bar Association and its nearly 400,000 members, I write to urge you to support funding for elder justice programs. As you return to Fiscal Year 2015 appropriations matters, the ABA respectfully requests that the Labor-HHS appropriations bill contain funding of at least $10 million for the Elder Justice Initiative for FY 2015 as included in the Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee bill.

The problem of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation is growing while the federal response to it is not. Today, it is estimated that one out of every ten persons over the age of 60 is a victim of elder abuse. Furthermore, victims of elder financial abuse lose almost $3 billion each year, including entire life savings. As a result, these victims often must rely on federal programs, enter nursing homes earlier, and live in poverty. Unfortunately an appropriate federal response has been lacking. Very little federal resources are currently available to fight elder abuse, but, with your help, we can make a positive change.

The Elder Justice Initiative is a good start. As proposed in the President’s budget (at a level of $25 million), it would be used to help build a national infrastructure for Adult Protective Services and to improve our research to include evidence-based screening for elder abuse. The Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee agreed to $10 million; this is the minimum needed to get the program off the ground. If approved, it would be the first direct appropriation for the bipartisan Elder Justice Act in its four-year history.

We also urge you to support the existing funding level of $1.7 billion for the Social Services Block Grant for FY 2015. We have worked with The Elder Justice Coalition, Members of Congress, and other interested parties on a bipartisan basis over the past decade on the critical issue of elder abuse. The ABA House has for over a decade advocated that governments
“maximize and expand resources for preventing and responding to elder abuse.” This is an extremely pivotal moment in this effort. Funding for the Social Service Block Grant -- the only source of federal funding for Adult Protective Services -- is essential to address elder abuse in America; it is an investment in protecting our most vulnerable citizens from the ravages of elder abuse.

The ABA thanks you and your staff for working with the various stakeholders to develop a plan for funding programs that help us curb elder abuse. We stand ready to assist you in moving this legislation forward.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Susman