

Elder Justice Reauthorization Act of 2020

Senate Finance Committee Ranking Member **Ron Wyden** House Ways & Means Committee Chairman **Richard Neal**, Senator **Bob Casey** and Representative **Suzanne Bonamici** propose **legislation to protect America's seniors.**

Background

The *Elder Justice Act* (EJA) was enacted in 2010 as part of the *Affordable Care Act*.¹ Public health and social services programs and activities authorized under the EJA are intended to address abuse, neglect, and exploitation of the elderly. The EJA appropriations authorizations expired in 2014 – and as COVID-19 continues to ravage nursing homes and disproportionately impact seniors, the need for funding to support these social programs is increasingly vital. The Elder Justice Act was a critically important investment in safety and security for older Americans. But after 10 years, it is clear that the vast need across the country remains. This bill would reauthorize and substantially increase investment in these programs, ramping up funding to enhance resources to support vulnerable populations.

Summary

Reauthorizing programs under the EJA is key to achieving better coordination of federal responses to elder abuse, promoting elder justice research and innovation, supporting Adult Protective Services systems, and providing additional protections for residents of long-term care facilities during the pandemic and beyond. Together, these activities are an important step toward a comprehensive response to ensure the safety and dignity of older adults and people with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on older people living in community or long-term care settings, underscoring the need for policies and funding to protect this vulnerable population.

Reauthorization of the Elder Justice Act

The legislation authorizes a substantial investment of \$2.22 billion in appropriations for EJA programs and activities through fiscal year (FY) 2024, including a total of:

- \$78 million for Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Forensic Centers;
- \$202.5 million for Grants for Long-term Care Staffing and Technology;
- \$1.5 billion for Adult Protective Services Functions and Grant Programs;
- \$217.5 million for Long-term Care Ombudsman Program Grants and Training; and
- \$204 million for Long-Term Care Investigation Systems and Training.

The bill requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to assess the extent to which EJA programs, coordinating bodies, registries, and activities have improved access to, and the quality of, resources available to aging Americans and their caregivers to ultimately prevent, detect, and treat abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Additional Support for Adult Protective Services

The legislation appropriates \$200 million to the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) for the sole purpose of supporting adult protective services, of which \$10 million will go to Tribal adult protective services. Funds will be distributed to states based on SSBG's population formula, and to tribes based on existing Tribal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) formula. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will distribute the funds to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and all five U.S. Territories within 45 days, and requires states and territories to obligate the funds within 120 days of receipt.

¹ P.L. 111-148, as amended