

STATE SENATOR • TUPAC A. HUNTER • 5TH DISTRICT

Hunter Press Release

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Hunter Sponsors Senior Citizen Protection Bill

Bill would increase penalties for crimes against seniors

LANSING- Tupac Hunter introduced legislation this week to give greater protection to Michigan's vulnerable senior citizens by increasing the penalties for crimes committed against them. Senate Bill 907 would impose tougher penalties for crimes committed against the elderly. The bill specifically targets crimes committed within licensed and unlicensed adult care facilities, such as interfering with an investigation.

“Critical evidence can be lost in elder abuse cases due to obstructing investigation, delaying justice and making prosecution less likely,” said Sen. Hunter. “I hope to discourage elder abuse and fraud by increasing the severity of these penalties and sending those predators to prison for a very long time and making sure the punishment properly fits the crime.”

A number of recent elder abuse cases across Michigan show the need for this kind of legislation. In Ottawa County, a woman was only sentenced to four months in jail for neglecting her 87-year-old father and leaving him in unfit living conditions that ultimately lead to his death from malnutrition. And a case in Genesee County revealed a man's embezzlement of \$190,000 from his elderly mother and also unearthed evidence of child sexual abuse. And right here in Wayne County, an 82-year-old man had \$240,000 withdrawn from his account by his daughter, but he was told by police that he would have a tough time pressing charges since she was authorized to access the account.

Sen. Hunter also cosponsored this same bill in the “Safeguard Our Seniors” legislative package that was introduced last session. It is believed that over 2 million older Americans are the victims of elder abuse annually. That includes physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect as well as the financial exploitation and theft of resources. Here in Michigan, reports of elder abuse to the Department of Human Services' Adult Protective Services Program have jumped 40% in the last decade, with 16,300 instances of elder abuse reported in 2008. However, a majority of elder abuse incidents go unreported, which places estimates of abuse closer to 73,000, according to the Governor's Task Force on Elder Abuse.

“Placing an elderly parent or family member in a care facility is never an easy decision, and it can be even more difficult if we are worried about their safety,” said Senator Hunter. I hope that my bills will see quick action so that we can make Michigan a safer, more secure place for senior citizens and their families.”

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Sen. Hunter represents the 5th district, which is comprised of northwest Detroit, Dearborn and Inkster. He serves as Minority Vice Chair of the Banking & Financial Institutions and the Homeland Security & Emerging Technologies Committees. He is also a member of the Commerce & Tourism and the Economic Development & Regulatory Reform Committees.