

Statement of Ronald Winter to Committee on Aging 2-10-2011

Good day ladies and gentlemen. On Dec. 22, 2008 my widowed mother, Ella Winter, then aged 91, permanently relocated to my home from the Albany, New York area, after living alone for nearly a decade. She had been hospitalized the previous week for potassium deficiency and dehydration.

Within days, after much needed sleep and adjustments to her nutritional needs, Mom regained her faculties, but quickly discovered that my sister had kept her checkbook in New York. My mother and sister argued about this for a week and Mom then rescinded my sister's Power of Attorney and began transferring her assets to Connecticut.

My sister and brother responded by suing my mother in Albany Supreme Court, attempting to force her into an Alzheimer's home near Albany, with my sister in possession and control of all of Mom's finances. But after a grueling day of testimony in late March 2009 Mom won; the suit was dismissed and she was declared competent.

My family then employed a different tactic, making myriad false complaints of elder abuse to the Connecticut Department of Social Services, sparking repeated investigations to harass my mother, my family and myself. They have done this for more than a year – rotating the false complaints between four of them, all claiming that Mom is being abused in our home.

A DSS investigator came to our home unannounced, in June 2009 and was given full access to my mother. The investigator concluded that the allegation, made in that case by my sister, was false and the matter was closed. But the complaints continued unabated.

During the second investigation I also reported that my mother had suffered a bout of stress or fear induced delirium, which is potentially fatal to the elderly, after the previous visit. Mom's doctor diagnosed that attack, in writing, attributing it to fear over my family's relentless pressure to force her back to New York and into the nursing home.

DSS has formally contacted us four times, with two visits to our home, and one full investigation. Each contact has resulted in another bout of delirium. DSS has told me that they are required to conduct a new investigation each time they receive what they call "new information," and one staffer said if they receive 100 complaints they will conduct 100 investigations. The DSS has become in effect, and in fact, my mother's abusers.

The proposed changes to the elder abuse law will give the state the power and hopefully the responsibility to file formal charges against anyone who does this in the future.

There is no change to the existing laws protecting the elderly, and no reason to fear prosecution for reporting real abuse, or even making a mistake. But malicious false reports will carry a stiff penalty as they should. I strongly urge this panel to approve these changes and truly protect Connecticut's elderly citizens.