NATASHA M. PIERRE, ESQ.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Aging Committee
Tuesday, March 3, 2015

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Serra and distinguished members of the Aging Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Senate Bill No. 1005, *An Act Protecting Elderly Persons From Exploitation*

Financial exploitation of seniors, a form of elder abuse, is on the rise and often goes unreported. The elder may experience shame, embarrassment, fear and guilt, coupled with the devastating reality that a trusted caretaker or family member is responsible for the abuse. Further, as the elder ages, mental and physical limitations may increase the elder's potential for abuse. Elders are likely to suffer financial, emotional and social harm as well as physical health effects.

Perpetrators of financial exploitation establish a relationship of trust with the elder and are often involved in the direct care of the elder. Sadly, many elders are victimized by members of their own family, increasing the likelihood that the abuse will go unreported. In any event, perpetrators manipulate, coerce, pressure and deceive elders into total control of their finances and assets, while stealing the elder blind.

Senate Bill No. 1005 will make it clear that any person who violates the trust and welfare of an elderly person for personal financial gain will face harsh consequences. This proposal is a holistic approach to the rapidly increasing problem of financial exploitation upon our elders. I would, however, like to bring to the Committee's attention, *Senate Bill No. 896*, which addresses the *response* to reported incidents of elder abuse, including financial exploitation. Together the proposals will undoubtedly reduce the momentum of financial exploitation of elderly persons.

The Office of the Victim Advocate has visited many senior centers across the state to talk about crimes that target seniors and provide tips for enhancing their safety. The stories of financial abuse are difficult to hear, especially in cases where the perpetrator escapes accountability. Senate Bill

No. 1005 will provide greater protections for this vulnerable and trusting population. I strongly urge the Committee's favorable report. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Natasha M. Pierre, Esq.
State Victim Advocate