

Adult Protective Services

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Let's get behind Protective Services for our adults between the ages of 18 to 59. Legislation will be reintroduced in January 2009 and we need to help get this legislation passed.

Throughout Pennsylvania, there have been **many cases of abuse and neglect** of people between the **ages of 18 and 59** with disabilities. A House hearing held in the fall of 2006 documented a number of them, including a young woman with mental retardation who spent several days locked in a basement with her dead sister and a woman with multiple sclerosis who was raped by her husband. **Current laws and policies do not protect** them.

Just as we **need protective services laws and systems for older Pennsylvanians and for children**, we need a law to protect vulnerable adults between the ages of 18 and 59. That was the **conclusion of a study** conducted by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee in September 2003.

PA is one of **only six states** that fails to provide protective services for adults.

In the wake of the LBFC study, a **cross-disability coalition** of people with disabilities, their families and advocates came together to develop **principles** for what an APS system should look like in PA. They agreed that the legislation must **balance individual rights with the need for protection**.

SB 1049 and HB 361 were drafted based on the principles outlined by the disability groups. They are **strongly supported by groups** representing people with disabilities and their family members. In fact, there's been **no opposition**. The Secretaries of Aging and Public Welfare have expressed support, while raising concern about where to find the money. Both bills saw some movement in the 2007-08 legislative session which ended in November, 2008. Legislation will be reintroduced with new bill numbers in the 2009-10 session which begins in January, 2009.

In addition to passing a good bill, we also need to secure funding for the system. As taxpayers, we understand that **budgets are tight**, but believe that this must be a **priority**. The good news is that the first year after legislation is passed will be taken up with start-up activities, so there would be no cost in the next budget. After that, we estimate a cost of about \$6 million a year.

Our state's failure to provide protections for people between 18 and 59, at some point, could jeopardize our federal funding. That's one reason to act quickly to pass APS. But, more importantly, it's long past time to **fix this gaping hole in our safety net**.

It's critical that we all work **together in the new legislative session to pass strong Adult Protective Services legislation**. **No one else should be injured or even killed while we wait.**

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