

HB 33-Sandra Zylberman, support

My thanks to the committee for giving me the opportunity to address you on the importance of passing HB 33. I am here to speak on the devastating impact psychological abuse of a vulnerable elder has on the victim, the family and loved ones.

Psychological abuse is an essential component of both financial and physical abuse of vulnerable seniors, and sadly is not specifically mentioned in our state's regulations.

From 2013 to 2015 my sister chose to bully, browbeat, humiliate, abuse and rob my 92 year old father of his independence, his money, his family, his dignity and his health. Dad had begun to show signs of dementia which gave her the ability to gain the upper hand through a systematic campaign of lies that served to undermine Dad's sense of stability, normalcy and security. Unfortunately, it is often those closest to us who have the emotional tools most capable of destroying us.

Tragically, despite my best efforts, I could not protect my father from her onslaught. Having insufficient funds to wage a custody battle, I turned to local government, specifically the Montgomery County Elder Abuse Agency, but was told that senior citizens are not legally protected from psychological abuse. I appealed desperately to his attorney, caretakers, and those who ran the Rockville Hebrew Home, but was met with indifference and silence.

Meanwhile, my sister isolated him from his family and friends, going so far as to call in the police to block our visits. His health continued to deteriorate because, fearing exposure, she refused to provide the dementia care four geriatric experts recommended.

Crimes against him enacted by her attorney included attempts to move him the New York State against his will, successfully forcing him to remove himself without counsel from his financial trust, and changing his advanced directive and medical power of attorney to help her gain control.

I was only able to legally intervene when she coerced him into violating his financial trust by transferring \$150,000 into her account. Sadly, by then, his end was near and the damage done to him was irreparable. He died soon thereafter, alone, having been completely isolated by his abuser. The most chilling aspect of my testimony is that my story is not a unique one.

Respectfully, I request that we take the necessary steps to join approximately 20 other states and criminalize psychological abuse of our vulnerable adults. Please pass House Bill 33.