AN ACT

RELATING TO CRIMINAL OFFENSES -- ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION OF ELDERS -- ABUSE AND ISOLATION OF ELDERS OR DEPENDENT ADULTS -- THE PETER FALK CRIMINAL ISOLATION OF ELDERS ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Edwards, Canario, Kennedy, Azzinaro, and O'Brien

Date Introduced: January 29, 2020

Referred To: House Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 11-68-1 of the General Laws in Chapter 11-68 entitled “Exploitation of Elders” is hereby amended to read as follows:

11-68-1. Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) "Business relationship" means a relationship between two (2) or more individuals or entities where there exists an oral or written contract or agreement for goods or services.

(2) "Caregiver" means a person who has been entrusted with or has assumed responsibility for the care or the property of an elder person. Caregiver includes, but is not limited to, relatives, court-appointed or voluntary guardians, adult household members, neighbors, health care providers, and employees and volunteers of elder care facilities.

(3) "Deception" means misrepresenting or concealing a material fact relating to:

(i) Services rendered, disposition of property, or use of property, when such services or property are intended to benefit an elder person; or

(ii) Terms of a contract or agreement entered into with an elder person; or

(iii) An existing or preexisting condition of any property involved in a contract or agreement entered into with an elder person; or

(iv) Using any misrepresentation, false pretense, or false promise in order to induce, encourage or solicit an elder person to enter into a contract or agreement.
(4) "Elder person" means a person sixty-five (65) sixty (60) years of age or older.

(5) "Intimidation" means the communication by word or act to an elder person that the elder person will be deprived of food, nutrition, clothing, shelter, supervision, medicine, medical services, money, or financial support or will suffer physical violence.

(6) "Lacks capacity to consent" means an impairment by reason of mental illness, developmental disability, organic brain disorder, physical illness or disability, short-term memory loss, or other cause, that causes an elder person to lack sufficient understanding or capacity to make or communicate reasonable decisions concerning the elder person's person or property.

(7) "Position of trust and confidence" with respect to an elder person means the position of a person who:

(i) Is a spouse, adult child, or other relative by blood or marriage of the elder person;

(ii) Is a joint tenant or tenant in common with the elder person;

(iii) Has a legal or fiduciary relationship with the elder person including, but not limited to, a court-appointed or voluntary guardian, trustee, attorney, or conservator;

(iv) Is the caregiver of the elder person; or

(v) Is any other person who has been entrusted with or has assumed responsibility for the use or management of the elder person's funds, assets, or property.

SECTION 2. Title 11 of the General Laws entitled "CRIMINAL OFFENSES" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

CHAPTER 68.1

ABUSE AND ISOLATION OF ELDERS OR DEPENDENT ADULTS -- THE PETER FALK CRIMINAL ISOLATION OF ELDERS ACT

11-68.1-1. Short title.

This chapter shall be known and may be cited as the "Peter Falk Criminal Isolation of Elders Act."

11-68.1-2. Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

1. "Abuse" means physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or emotional abuse of an elder person or dependent adult:

   (i) "Emotional abuse" means a pattern of willful infliction of mental or emotional harm upon an elder or dependent adult by threat, intimidation, isolation or other abusive conduct.

   (ii) "Physical abuse" means the willful infliction of physical pain or injury including, but not limited to, slapping, bruising or restraining upon an elder person or dependent adult.

   (iii) "Sexual abuse" means the infliction of non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
upon an elder person. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, rape, sexual
misuse, or exploitation of an elder person or dependent adult, as well as threats of sexual abuse
where the perpetrator has the intent and the capacity to carry out the threatened abuse.

(2) "Caregiver" means a person who has been entrusted with or has assumed
responsibility for the care, custody, or control of, whether for pecuniary gain, by contract, or as a
result of the ties of friendship or who stands in a position of trust with, an elder person or
dependent adult. Caregiver includes, but is not limited to, caretakers, relatives, court-appointed
guardians, adult household members, conservators, attorney-in-fact, neighbors, health care
providers, and employees and volunteers of elder care facilities.

(3) "Dependent adult" means any individual eighteen (18) years of age, who has a
physical or mental impairment that restricts their ability to carry out normal activities or to protect
their rights. The term includes, but is not limited to, persons who have physical or developmental
disabilities or whose physical or mental capacity have diminished because of age.

(4) "Elder person" means a person sixty (60) years of age or older.

(5) "Isolate" means the restriction of personal rights retained by the elder or dependent
adult, including, but not limited to, the right to receive visitors, telephone calls, and personal mail
unless the restriction of personal rights is authorized by court order.

(6) "Neglect" means the willful failure by a caregiver or other person with a duty of care
to provide goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental harm, or mental illness to
an elder person, including, but not limited to, "abandonment" (withdrawal of necessary
assistance) and denial of food or health related services.

(7) "Position of trust" means a person who:

(i) Is a spouse, adult child, or other relative by blood or marriage of the elder person or
dependent adult;

(ii) Has a legal or fiduciary relationship with the elder person including, but not limited
to, a court-appointed or voluntary guardian, trustee, attorney, or conservator;

(iii) Is the caregiver of the elder person; or

(iv) Is any other person who has been entrusted with or has assumed responsibility for the
care, custody, or control of the elder person or dependent adult.

(8) "Willful" means intentional, conscious and directed toward achieving a purpose.

11-68.1-3. Abuse or isolation of an elder person or dependent adult prohibited.

Any person, including any caretaker defined in this chapter, is guilty of isolation of an
elder person or dependent adult if the person willfully isolates an elder person or dependent adult.

11-68.1-4. Penalties for violations.
(a) Any person convicted of abuse or isolation of an elder or dependent adult shall be
guilty of a felony and be imprisoned not exceeding three (3) years or subject to a fine of three
thousand dollars ($3,000) or both.

(b) In addition to any sentence imposed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section any
person convicted of violating this section may be required to undergo appropriate counseling as a
condition of any sentence imposed and provided, further, that the costs of the counseling so
imposed shall be paid by the defendant when possible.

Guardianship and Guardianship of Adults" is hereby amended to read as follows:

33-15-18.1. Rights of persons subject to limited guardianship, guardianship and
conservatorship.

(a) Unless specifically authorized by court order, a limited guardian, guardian, or
conservator shall not restrict a ward's right of communication, visitation, or interaction with other
persons, including the right to receive visitors, telephone calls, or personal mail. If a ward is
unable to express consent to communication, visitation, or interaction with a person due to a
physical or mental condition, then consent of the ward may be presumed based on the ward's
prior relationship history with the person.

(b) A limited guardian, guardian, or conservator may, for good cause shown, move the
court to have restrictions placed on a person's ability to communicate, visit, or interact with a
ward in accordance with subsection (c) of this section. Good cause means and includes:

(1) Whether any protective orders have been issued to protect the ward from the person
seeking access to the ward;

(2) Whether abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of the ward by the person seeking
access to the ward has occurred or is likely to occur;

(3) Documented wishes of the ward to reject communication, visitation, or interaction
with specific persons; or

(4) Any other factors deemed relevant by the court.

(c)(1) A court may order restrictions placed on the communications, visitations, or
interactions a person may have with a ward upon a showing of good cause by the limited
guardian, guardian, or conservator.

(2) In determining whether to issue an order in accordance with subsection (c)(1) of this
section, the following factors shall be considered by the court:

(i) Whether any protective orders have been issued to protect the ward from the person
seeking access to the ward;
(ii) Whether the person has been charged with abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of
the ward;

(iii) Whether the ward expresses a desire to communicate, visit, or interact with the
person;

(iv) If the ward is unable to communicate, whether a properly executed living will,
durable power of attorney, or advance directive contains a preference by the ward with regard to
the person's communication, visitation, or interaction with the ward; and

(v) Any other factors deemed relevant by the court.

(3) Prior to issuing an order pursuant to subsection (c) of this section, the court shall
consider the following restrictions in the order listed:

(i) Placing reasonable time, manner, or place restrictions on communication, visitation, or
interaction between the ward and another person based on the history between the ward and the
person or the ward's wishes, or both;

(ii) Requiring that communication, visitation, or interaction between the ward and
another person be supervised; or

(iii) Denying communication, visitation, or interaction between the ward and another
person, provided, that, unless the court finds that the person poses a threat to the ward, supervised
communication, visitation, or interaction under subsection (c)(3)(ii) of this section shall be
ordered prior to the denial of any communication, visitation, or interaction.

(d)(1) If any interested person, including the ward, reasonably believes that subsection (a)
of this section or an order issued pursuant to subsection (c)(1) of this section has been violated,
then such person may move the court to:

(i) Require the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator to grant a person access to the
ward;

(ii) Restrict, or further restrict, a person's access to the ward;

(iii) Modify the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator's duties; or

(iv) Discharge and replace the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator pursuant to §

(2) Notwithstanding actions available to the court pursuant to subsection (d)(1) of this
section, a limited guardian, guardian, or conservator who is found to be knowingly isolating a
ward and who has violated subsection (a) of this section or an order issued pursuant to subsection
(c) of this section shall be subject to discharge and replacement pursuant to § 33-15-18.

(e)(1) Except as provided in subsection (e)(2) of this section, the court shall schedule a
hearing on a motion filed pursuant to subsection (b) or (d) of this section no later than thirty (30)
days after the date the motion is filed. The court may, in its discretion, order mediation to be
conducted between the parties and the ward prior to the hearing. If mediation results in agreement
of the parties and the ward with regard to communication, visitation, or interaction with the ward,
the agreement shall be approved and memorialized in an order by the court.

(2)(i) If the motion states that the ward's health is in significant decline or that the ward's
death may be imminent, the court shall conduct an emergency hearing as soon as practicable, but
no later than ten (10) days after the motion is filed.

(ii) When a scheduling order is issued for a motion filed pursuant to subsection (c)(2)(i)
of this section, the court shall also order that supervised communication, visitation, or interaction
with the ward be granted during the period prior to the hearing.

(3) Notice of the hearing, a copy of the motion, and a copy of any order issued pursuant
to subsection (e)(2)(ii) of this section, if applicable, shall be personally served upon the ward and
any person against whom the motion is filed, and nothing in this section shall affect the ward's
right to appear and be heard in the proceedings.

(f)(1) The court may award the prevailing party in any action brought under this section
court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees; provided, however, that an award of court costs or
attorneys' fees shall not be paid out of the ward's estate.

(2) The court, upon motion or upon its own initiative, shall impose upon a limited
guardian, guardian, or conservator who is found to be knowingly isolating a ward and who has
violated subsection (a) of this section or an order issued pursuant to subsection (c) of this section
an appropriate sanction, including an order to pay court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees of the
other party or parties; provided, however, that no sanction shall be paid out of the ward's estate.

(g) A limited guardian, guardian, or conservator shall promptly notify a ward's closest
relatives and any person designated by the ward to be notified, along with the appropriate contact
information and upon the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator's knowledge of such event
and information, in the event:

(1) The ward's residence has changed;

(2) The ward is staying at a location other than the ward's residence for more than seven
(7) consecutive days;

(3) The ward is admitted to or discharged from a nursing home or assisted-care living
facility as defined in §§ 23-17-2 and 23-17.4-2;

(4) The ward is admitted to a medical facility for:

(i) Emergency care in response to a life-threatening injury or medical condition; or

(ii) Acute care; or
(iii) The ward dies, provided, that notification of the ward's death shall be made in person or by telephone.

(h)(1) A limited guardian, guardian, or conservator is not required to provide notice in accordance with subsection (g) of this section if:

(i) A person who is entitled to notice under subsection (g) of this section informs the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator, in writing, that the person does not wish to receive such notice; or

(ii) The ward or a court order has expressly prohibited the limited guardian, guardian, or conservator from providing notice to the person.

(2) A limited guardian, guardian, or conservator shall not provide contact information in accordance with subsection (g) of this section if an order of protection or restraining order has been issued against the person on behalf of the ward.

(i)(1) As used in this section, the term, "close relative" means:

(i) The protected person's spouse;

(ii) An adult child of the protected person;

(iii) A parent of the protected person; or

(iv) An adult nearest in kinship to the protected person.

(2) The closest relative shall not be the person who is a guardian of the protected person.

(3) If two (2) persons qualify as the closest relative, the notice required pursuant to this section shall be provided to both person. If more than two (2) persons qualify as the closest relative, the notice shall be provided to the two (2) oldest persons from among those persons who qualify.

(j) A court may, prior to considering any action available pursuant to this section, require the parties subject to the prospective court order to participate in a mediation process approved by the court. Mediation recommended pursuant to this section shall be provided by the department of elderly affairs and the department is authorized and directed to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 4. Section 42-66-4.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 42-66 entitled "Office of Healthy Aging" is hereby amended to read as follows:


As used in this chapter:

(1) "Abuse" means physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or emotional abuse of an elderly person by a caregiver as defined in subsection (5).

(a) "Physical abuse" means the willful infliction of physical pain or injury (e.g. slapping,
(b) "Sexual abuse" means the infliction of non-consensual sexual contact of any kind upon an elderly person. Sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, rape, sexual misuse or exploitation of an elder, as well as threats of sexual abuse where the perpetrator has the intent and the capacity to carry out the threatened abuse.

(c) "Emotional abuse" means a pattern of willful infliction of mental or emotional harm upon an elder by threat, intimidation, isolation or other abusive conduct.

(2) "Exploitation" means the fraudulent or otherwise illegal, unauthorized or improper act or process of an individual, including, but not limited to, a caregiver or fiduciary, that uses the resources of an elder for monetary or personal benefit, profit, gain, or that results in depriving an elder of rightful access to, or use of, benefits, resources, belongings, or assets by use of undue influence, harassment, duress, deception, false representation or false pretenses.

(3) "Neglect" means the willful failure by a caregiver or other person with a duty of care to provide goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental harm or mental illness to an elderly person, including, but not limited to, "abandonment" (withdrawal of necessary assistance) and denial of food or health related services.

(4) "Willful" means intentional, conscious and directed toward achieving a purpose.

(5) "Caregiver" means a person who has assumed the responsibility for the care of the elderly person voluntarily, by contract or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, or who is otherwise legally responsible for the care of the elderly person. Caregiver includes, but is not limited to, caretakers, relatives, court-appointed guardians, adult household members, neighbors, health care providers, and employees and volunteers of elder care facilities.

(6) "Self-neglect" means a pattern of behavior in an elderly person that directly, imminently and significantly threatens his/her own health and/or, safety. Self-neglect includes, but is not limited to, an inability or an incapacity to provide self with food, water, shelter, or safety to the point of establishing imminent risk of any of the harm(s) described in the immediately preceding sentence.

(7) "Protective services" means services and/or action intended to prevent and/or alleviate the abuse, neglect, exploitation or self-neglect of elderly persons. Protective services may include supervision, counseling, and assistance in securing health and supportive services, safe living accommodations and legal intervention.

(8) "Elderly person" or "elder" means any person sixty (60) years of age or older.
SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon passage.
This act would make it a felony to isolate an elder or dependent adult and would expand the persons entitled to notice when a guardianship or conservatorship petition is filed in the probate court for dependents or elderly adults.

This act would take effect upon passage.