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An Open Letter to Washington's Legislature

This letter is from concerned citizen advisory councils for the Washington Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. We urge you to restore the 37% of funding lost in 2011....\$612,000.

Do you believe that vulnerable adults should have their civil rights, dignity and autonomy protected? Long-term Care Ombudsmen promote and share those beliefs and reinvestment will ensure that the approximately 68,000 residents of nursing homes, adult family homes and assisted living facilities statewide get what they deserve. Each resident will have a certified community volunteer or staff who will visit on request.

These trained volunteers are legally mandated to respond to complaints about care, abuse and financial exploitation. They resolve problems at the lowest level before a crisis develops. That saves money and time. They conduct educational programs – most recently about inappropriate use of antipsychotic drugs. That saves money and lives. They identify broader resident rights issues that deserve scrutiny from lawmakers. That saves money and dignity.

But as it stands now the program cannot robustly fill this mission and that hurts residents. Training and recruitment of new advocates has dwindled. Nearly 688 of 1027 Adult Family Homes in King County do not receive the benefits of the extra set of eyes and ears of an Ombudsman.

In 1999, the Department of Social and Health Services looked at what it would cost to replace the 350 volunteers in the LTCO Program with state employees. Adjusted for inflation today that figure amounts to...a donation of \$3,543,319.32 in protection of resident quality of life.

The Age Wave is upon us. Reinvestment in our services is critical to Washington State's protection of vulnerable adults.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Schlimme, Chair, Washington State LTCOP Advisory Council

Sean Bleck, Chair, King County LTCOP Advisory Council