

Hundreds Share Insights on Elder Abuse with MI AG, Supreme Court Justices During Listening Tour

LANSING – Traveling more than 2,600 miles around the state and hearing from more than 200 seniors and advocates about ways to address elder abuse, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and Michigan Supreme Court Justice Megan Cavanagh this week wrapped up their 12-stop Elder Abuse Listening Tour in Marquette.

Nessel along with Supreme Court Justices Cavanagh and Richard Bernstein embarked on the tour in June to better focus and guide the efforts of the Michigan Elder Abuse Task Force on the issues and concerns that impact Michigan seniors. The tour started in Grand Rapids in June and ended Monday at Northern Michigan University.

“This listening tour was about providing a voice to those who don’t often have a chance to speak up and speak out,” Nessel said. “We appreciate all those who attended and provided valuable input and feedback, the insights and personal experiences were humbling, at times heartbreaking, and always enlightening. We fully intend to incorporate these comments as we prepare to properly address the troubling issue of elder abuse.”

The Task Force, which launched in March, identified nine initiatives to tackle immediately as part of a statewide crackdown on elder abuse. The listening tour was developed to ensure the Task Force was on the right track with the first nine initiatives and to identify any additional issues that should be addressed.

In total, nearly 1,000 seniors and advocates attended at least one tour stop and more than 10,000 residents tuned in online via Facebook Live. The tour included stops to Bay, Berrien, Genesee, Grand Traverse, Isabella, Kalamazoo, Kent, Marquette, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties.

Of all the testimony provided, the three top concerns shared by seniors and advocates alike included:

- Full-time and court-appointed guardianships;
- Selling the personal property of a senior who has been declared a ward of the court; and
- Isolation from their families.

“The key thing that I have learned from these listening sessions is that there is no one-size-fits-all solution,” said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Megan K. Cavanagh. “Elder abuse is a complicated problem that takes a comprehensive solution with involvement of judges, prosecutors, protective service workers, neighbors, and family members. Together, we’ll tackle each challenge and won’t stop until the job is done.”

"Everything that we as public servants do centers on the people of Michigan, and we genuinely participated in the Task Force listening sessions to try to make a difference and try to help,"

said Michigan Supreme Court Justice Richard Bernstein. “I appreciate the courage of each and every person who spoke and shared their stories of pain and loss. Your strength in speaking out is the inspiration for the next step -- turning words into action.”

“I sincerely believe that when we are done with these initiatives, we will have made more progress in protecting our seniors than we have in the last 30 years,” Nessel added.

The Attorney General’s Elder Abuse Task Force is made up of more than 80 individuals representing more than 50 different organizations including law enforcement, state agencies, probate judges, the Michigan House, Senate and Congressional delegation, and advocacy groups.

For more information on Michigan’s Elder Abuse Task Force, visit Michigan.gov/ElderAbuse.