

MEDICAL ALERT PROGRAM FOR MISSING SENIORS

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House Bill 5190 as introduced
Sponsor: Rep. Mark Meadows
Committee: Senior Health, Security, and Retirement

Complete to 9-11-09

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5190 AS REPORTED FROM COMMITTEE ON 9-9-09

The bill would create the "Mozelle Senior Medical Alert Act" as the official response to reports of "missing seniors" (60 years of age and older), provide for the broadcasting or publishing of information about such incidents, and offer certain civil immunity. More specifically, the bill would do all of the following:

Missing Senior. The bill would define "missing senior" as a resident of the state who is at least 60 years of age, who is reported missing by a person familiar with the missing senior, and who is believed to be incapable of returning to home without assistance. The bill would define a "person familiar with the missing senior" as that person's guardian, custodian, or guardian ad litem, or an individual who provides the senior with home health aid services, possesses a health care power of attorney, or has proof that the missing senior has a medical condition.

Notification, Report Preparation, and Investigation. A law enforcement agency that receives notice of a missing senior from a person familiar with the missing person would be required to prepare a report. The report would include the physical description of the missing senior; the date, time and place last seen; the last known address; any information gathered by a preliminary investigation if one was made; and a statement by the law enforcement officer in charge setting forth an assessment of the case based upon the evidence and information received.

The law enforcement agency would be required to prepare the report as soon as practicable but no later than five hours after receiving notification of a missing senior. The law enforcement would also be required to begin an investigation concerning the missing senior as soon as possible after receiving the missing senior report notification.

Report Distribution. Upon completion of the report, the law enforcement agency would be required to immediately forward contents of the report to all enforcement agencies with jurisdiction in the location where the missing senior resides and was last seen, all law enforcement agencies that request a copy of the report, and all law enforcement agencies as requested by the person who made the missing senior notification—if the request is determined to be reasonable by the law enforcement agency.

Media Publication. After forwarding the contents of the report to a broadcaster or newspaper, the law enforcement agency could request the broadcaster or newspaper

notify the public that there is a senior medical alert and to broadcast or publish a description of the missing senior and other relevant information that would assist in locating the individual.

Media Immunity. A broadcaster or newspaper that notifies the public of a senior medical alert and broadcasts or publishes the public information, and any information that would assist in locating the missing senior, is immune from civil liability for an act of omission related to the broadcast or publication. However, civil immunity would not apply to an act or omission that constitutes gross negligence or willful, wanton, or intentional misconduct.

Missing/Found Senior Notification. A person familiar with the missing senior who notifies a law enforcement agency concerning a missing senior would also be required to notify the law enforcement agency when that person becomes aware that the missing senior has been found.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have an indeterminate impact on state and local governments. Law enforcement agencies may experience various administrative costs for preparing and issuing the reports, and other resources may be needed in investigating the incidents and attempting to locate the missing persons.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The bill is a reintroduction of House Bill 4819, which passed the House in the 2007-08 legislative session. The bill addresses the problem of elderly persons who wander away from home, go missing, and are believed by those who know them to be incapable of returning home without assistance. The bill is named for a woman from southwest Detroit who died from exposure and lack of medicine in April 2005 after being missing for four days. The bill would also set up a special alert system so that those close to elderly missing persons could involve both the police and the news media in the search.

POSITIONS:

Office of Services to the Aging supports the bill. (9-9-09)

The Department of State Police supports the bill. (9-9-09)

State Long-Term Care Ombudsman supports the bill. (9-9-09)

A representative of the Alzheimer's Association testified in support of the bill. 9-9-09

A representative from AARP testified in support of the bill. (9-9-09)

Elder Law of Michigan supports the bill. (9-9-09)

East Lansing Senior Commission supports the bill. (9-9-09)

Michigan Association of Senior Centers supports the bill. (9-9-09)

A representative of the Mozelle Pierce family testified in support of the bill. (9-9-09)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.