

Date of Hearing: April 19, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON AGING AND LONG-TERM CARE

Adrin Nazarian, Chair

AB 2175 (Blanca Rubio) – As Introduced February 15, 2022

SUBJECT: California Wandering Prevention Task Force

SUMMARY: Establishes the California Wandering Prevention Taskforce (Taskforce) under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to address on a statewide basis the issue of wandering by individuals with cognitive impairment. Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) The Taskforce will include 20 members to be appointed by the Attorney General or their designee. Members will include:
 - a. The Director of the California Department of Aging, or their designee.
 - b. A representative from the DOJ.
 - c. Two members representing law enforcement, such as the Department of the California Highway Patrol or the California State Sheriff's Office.
 - d. One member representing firefighters.
 - e. One member representing police departments.
 - f. Three county representatives, each from an urban, suburban, and rural county.
 - g. One member representing and organization providing services to individuals with Alzheimer's disease.
 - h. One member representing and organization providing services to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
 - i. Two family members of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or related disorders, or ASD.
 - j. One member representing adult protective services agencies.
 - k. One member representing hospital systems.
 - l. One member representing the County of Los Angeles L.A Found initiative.
 - m. One member representing the field of wandering technology.
 - n. One member representing the League of California Cities or another organization representing cities.
 - o. One member representing regional centers.
 - p. One member representing the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

- 2) The Taskforce shall meet four to six times per year to accomplish objectives.
- 3) The Taskforce shall report recommendations for wandering prevention to the Legislature by June 30, 2024. The report shall address the following:
 - a. Technology solutions.
 - b. Social services coordination.
 - c. Law enforcement coordination.
 - d. Family caregiver and professional education and training.
 - e. Public awareness.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Department to provide leadership to area agencies on aging in developing systems of home and community-based services that maintain individuals in their own homes or least restrictive homelike environments.
- 2) Ensures that older individuals and functionally impaired adults receive needed services that will enable them to maintain the maximum independence permitted by their functional ability and remain in their own home or communities for as long as possible. (Welfare and Institutions Code 9450)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown.

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: According to the author, "Individuals with a cognitive impairment, including those with Alzheimer's, related dementias and autism are at a substantial risk of wandering. Ensuring safety for these populations is costly, time consuming, and often results in poor outcomes once they have begun to wander. A wide variety of organizations and entities play a role in locating and ensuring safety for these persons, however their guidance varies significantly by geography. Fortunately, programs such as Project Lifesaver have invested heavily in determining the safest and most effective strategies for helping wandering individuals. The immense success of this program and positive outcomes in Los Angeles County alone demonstrates how much further the state can assist in returning this population to safety. Using this framework, AB 2175 provides a long overdue statewide strategy to help one of our most vulnerable populations."

Background:

An article relating to ASD and wandering¹ found nearly half of children with ASD were reported to engage in elopement behavior, with a substantial number at risk for bodily harm. These results

¹ Anderson C, Law JK, Daniels A, Rice C, Mandell DS, Hagopian L, Law PA. Occurrence and family impact of elopement in children with autism spectrum disorders. *Pediatrics*. 2012 Nov;130(5):870-7. doi: 10.1542/peds.2012-0762. Epub 2012 Oct 8. PMID: 23045563; PMCID: PMC4524545.

highlight the urgent need to develop interventions to reduce the risk of elopement, to support families coping with this issue, and to train child care professionals, educators, and first responders who are often involved when elopements occur.

Another article focusing on dementia-related wandering² found, given that a missing incident is relatively common among persons with dementia, health care professionals should assist caregivers with a missing incident plan early in the disease process. Also, as missing persons are found by persons other than the caregiver and caregivers underutilize identification devices, health care professionals may recommend the use of identification devices to facilitate a safe return.

Master Plan for Aging: In January of 2021, the Governor released his Master Plan for Aging (MPA). The MPA prioritizes the health and well-being of older Californians and the need for policies that promote healthy aging. The MPA serves as a blueprint for state government, local government, the private sector, and philanthropy to prepare the state for the coming demographic changes and continue California's leadership in aging, disability, and equity.

The work plan laid out in the MPA one year after its release continues to highlight the urgent needs facing California's older adults, people with disabilities, their families, advocates and the workforce supporting these populations.

The MPA outlines five bold goals and 23 strategies to build a California for All Ages by 2030. It also includes a Data Dashboard on Aging to measure progress.

Taskforce on Alzheimer's Disease Prevention and Preparedness: In 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom formed the Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease Prevention, Preparedness and the Path Forward (Alzheimer's Taskforce). The purpose of the Alzheimer's Taskforce was to present recommendations to the Governor on how local communities, private organizations, businesses, government, and families can prevent and prepare for the rise in the number of cases of Alzheimer's Disease and all its consequences. Recommendations from the Alzheimer's Taskforce were incorporated into the MPA.

Arguments in Support: Alzheimer's Los Angeles, Alzheimer's Orange County and Alzheimer's San Diego, all co-sponsors of the bill state, "Prevention is the key to addressing the risk of wandering and protecting the lives of some of our most vulnerable Californians. This bill is an important first step in helping California prevent wandering of those with a cognitive impairment."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Alzheimer's Los Angeles (Co-Sponsor)
Alzheimer's Orange County (Co-Sponsor)
Alzheimer's San Diego (Co-Sponsor)

² Bowen ME, McKenzie B, Steis M, Rowe M. Prevalence of and antecedents to dementia-related missing incidents in the community. *Dement Geriatr Cogn Disord*. 2011;31(6):406-12. doi: 10.1159/000329792. Epub 2011 Jul 13. PMID: 21757904.

Alzheimer's Association
Autism Society San Francisco Bay Area
Autism Speaks
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

Opposition

None on file.

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