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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Elder Economic Security Standard Reveals New Levels of Need and Hardship among Older Adults in Michigan

Michigan's older adults are more likely to be poor and at greater risk of not being able to afford their basic living expenses than U.S. census data indicate. According to a recent analysis comparing income data for Michigan seniors (people 65 and older) to the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index, 37% of Michigan's seniors are living at or below a level of basic economic security. Many of these older adults dwell in the state's seemingly comfortable suburbs. Yet they struggle financially – simply to buy the basic food, housing, transportation and medical care needed to survive.

"This invisible poverty is all around us," explained Dr. Thomas Jankowski, from the Wayne State University Institute of Gerontology's *Seniors Count!* Project, and lead author of the study. For example, in Oakland County, home to Bloomfield Hills (one of the top five wealthiest suburbs in the U.S.), one out of every three people over age 65 is unable to meet basic living expenses. "As more people live longer, this will worsen," he said.

Dr. Jankowski and his team unearthed these statistics by applying the Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index) to Michigan population data. The Elder Index measures economic security by producing a snapshot of basic expenses in retirement, including housing, health care, food, transportation, and other essentials such as long-term care when needed.

"The report is very illuminating," said Kate White, Executive Director of Elder Law of Michigan. "Anecdotally, we have learned that older adults have been struggling to make ends meet for several years. *Now we can quantify it.* The numbers are frighteningly large, particularly in the City of Detroit where 60% of older adults are living in very hard conditions. I don't think this is the economic situation some people thought we had for retirees and older adults in our state."

The data has national implications. "As our members of Congress talk about possible reductions in benefits for Medicare or freezes in Social Security indexing, we now know that 1 in 3 older adults can't afford it. They aren't making ends meet now, and any reductions in benefits or increases in premiums will really hurt them. We could easily see a slip back into the kind of poverty that makes Social Security and Medicare so important in the first place. It is a retreat from our commitment to older adults to be able to live modestly, but with dignity," said White.

The full report can be found at:

<http://seniorscount.iog.wayne.edu/index.php/downloads/view/download/6/66.html>

About Elder Law of Michigan:

Elder Law of Michigan is 501c3 charitable non-profit organization. Elder Law's mission is to promote and protect the rights, health and economic well-being of people as they age or people with disabilities by providing information, advocacy, legal advice and professional services. ELM seeks to be the most trusted resource for adults to ensure that they are safe, informed, treated fairly and economically secure as they age. For more information please visit www.elderlawofmi.org.

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