



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 28, 2009

Contact: Kate White

Elder Law of Michigan

517-853-2375 or 896-0347 cell

kwhite@elderlawofmi.org

Findings Reveal Michigan Elders Need Support to Make Ends Meet

Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index Measures what it Costs to Age in Place

LANSING, MI – One out of four Michigan elders lives solely on their Social Security, falling short of what it takes to make ends meet in retirement. According to the Michigan Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index), depending on housing and health circumstances, single elders living in Michigan need between \$16,718 and \$24,704 to cover basic living costs. The average annual Social Security benefit totals just \$13,976, providing only 57 to 84 percent of what elders need to be economically secure according to statewide findings.

These findings, along with information on how legislators can best help elder constituents enroll in income support programs, were presented today at a briefing sponsored by Elder Law of Michigan (Elder Law) and Michigan AARP at the Anderson House Office Building.

“These numbers tell us how much income elders need to age in place in their communities and that many are not receiving enough to do so,” said Kate White, Executive Director of Elder Law. “The Michigan Elder Index is a reliable measurement that policymakers, advocates, service providers, seniors and families can use to determine how best to bridge the gap between what resources elders have and what they need to live humbly but with dignity,” said White.

Elder Law leads the Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative, a broad-based campaign offering a conceptual framework and tools to promote the economic security of elders and their families. The cornerstone of the Initiative, the Elder Index, measures the basic income older adults require to make ends meet in their communities. The Elder Index was created by Wider Opportunities for Women, a Washington, D.C. based national advocacy organization, in partnership with the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston,

Income support programs are critical to bridging the gap between an elder’s income and economic security. As shown, those living on Social Security alone in Michigan need extra support to meet their most basic needs for food, transportation, housing, and health care. A lack of knowledge about income support programs and their eligibility requirements, however, prevent elders from receiving the help

they qualify for. To overcome this, AARP makes available Benefits QUICKLINK, a tool that allows elders to determine their eligibility for income supports in their area, including the Medicare Savings Program (MSP) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

“Benefits QUICKLINK is an easy-to use online system that many elders are simply unaware of,” said Anita Salustro of the AARP Foundation. “We are educating policymakers today on this tool, so they can pass the information to their constituents who are not able to make ends meet in these tough economic times. We will continue to spread the word on our tool because elders need to know that assistance is available to move them toward economic security.”

The Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative is informing national, state and local advocacy, outreach, and policymaking efforts nationwide to ensure today’s and future generations of elders are able to age in place with dignity.

#

Elder Law of Michigan

***Elder Law of Michigan** Elder Law of Michigan is committed to promoting and protecting the rights, health and economic well-being older adults by providing information, advocacy, legal advice and professional services. As a mission and values driven non-profit organization, Elder Law of Michigan works at the local, state, regional and national level to craft and deliver responsive programming and to advocate for public policy to meet the changing needs of individuals who are living longer in a complicated world. Elder Law takes the lead on the Michigan Elder Economic Security Initiative, a broad-based project offering tools and resources to promote elder economic security. One of these tools, The Elder Index, created by Wider Opportunities for Women, a Washington, D.C. based national advocacy organization, in partnership with the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, measures the basic income older adults require to make ends meet in their communities.*