

JPAC *for OLDER ADULTS*

Joint Public Affairs Committee / 132 West 31st Street – 10th Floor / NY, NY 10001 / 212-273-5262

Sponsored by Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA)

Silver Alert System

Remarks by Molly Krakowski

Director of Legislative Affairs and JPAC for Older Adults

Jewish Association for Services for the Aged

Thank you for convening this session today on Intro. 270. My name is Molly Krakowski, and I am the Director of Legislative Affairs and the Joint Public Affairs Committee for Older Adults at the Jewish Association for Services for the Aged (JASA).

JASA fully supports Intro. Number 270, which would amend the administrative code of the City of New York and establish a silver alert program. JASA's mission is to sustain and enrich the lives of older adults in metropolitan New York so that they can remain in the community with dignity and autonomy. Unfortunately, there are many older adults who suffer from cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's disease or dementia, this amendment would engage organizations like ours in the efforts to return the missing individual to a safe environment.

JASA has successfully worked to identify and train "gatekeepers" in the community, who are able to identify and assist older adults they encounter to get services they need, separate from professional interventions. "Gatekeepers" may include a postal worker, pharmacist, bank teller, neighbor, meals on wheels delivery person, etc... These people interact with the client on a regular basis and are often the first to notice if something is wrong or if there are changes in patterns or behaviors. They may also hold clues as to their whereabouts, should they go missing. Whether there is concern about elder abuse, mental or physical health issues, or someone has simply "not been acting like himself", the "gatekeepers" play an important role.

If JASA can be of assistance to the City Council in your efforts to engage the community in the Silver Alert System, please feel free to reach out to us.



**Department for
the Aging**

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TESTIMONY

presented by

**Caryn Resnick
Deputy Commissioner**

at a Hearing On

**Intro 0270-2010: Establishing a silver alert program to provide public notification for missing
senior citizens with cognitive impairments**

before the

New York City Council

Committee on Aging

on

Wednesday, June 23, 2010

1:00 P.M.

at

**250 Broadway
New York, New York, 10007**

Good afternoon, Chair Lappin and members of the Committee on Aging. My name is Caryn Resnick and I am the Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs at the Department for the Aging (DFTA). With me today is Robin Fenley, DFTA's Director for the Alzheimer's and Caregiver Resource Center. We are pleased to be here today along with our colleagues from the New York City Police Department and the New York City Office of Emergency Management to discuss Introductory Number 270 with you.

Introductory Number 270 is a collaborative effort between the City Council and the Mayor's Office to establish a Silver Alert program in the City of New York. The bill will provide rapid notification to the public when a senior citizen who suffers from any cognitive impairment, including but not limited to Alzheimer's disease or dementia, is reported missing to a law enforcement agency.

Nationally, Silver Alert is a public notification system to broadcast information about older adults who have been reported missing -- notably seniors with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairment -- in order to aid in their return. Protocols vary by state, but typically law enforcement agencies (often State Police) activate Silver Alerts. They can be broadcast on a wide range of outlets that includes television, radio and electronic road signs, and these alerts also may involve law enforcement, residents, hospitals and other institutions.

Oklahoma created the nation's first Silver Alert system in 2006. Since that time, 26 states have implemented Silver Alerts or similar programs focused on missing seniors. Eight other states have broader missing person alert systems that include protocols for missing seniors. At least 10 additional states have considered similar legislation, including New York State. Currently, the New York State Senate and Assembly have each passed legislation to create a "Missing Vulnerable Adults Clearinghouse" to facilitate a "Gold" Alert system. At the federal level, the National Silver Alert Act was re-introduced in the 111th Congress as H.R. 632. It has passed the House of Representatives and is currently pending in the Senate. The purpose of the bill is to enhance and integrate Silver Alert systems throughout the United States.

As you are aware, last August Mayor Bloomberg, Speaker Quinn and the New York Academy of Medicine unveiled 59 initiatives designed to enhance our City's livability for older New Yorkers as part of the *Age-Friendly NYC* project. *Age Friendly NYC* builds on the work of the World Health Organization's (WHO) *Age Friendly Cities* initiative, which engaged older adults and others in 35 cities around the world in identifying the core components of an age-friendly city. As one of the 59 initiatives, the City pledged to develop an alert program that would be added to Notify NYC, the service that allows New Yorkers to sign up and receive notification about emergency events via text message, phone message or email. The Mayor's Office and the City Council partnered last month to launch *Senior Alert*, a program that utilizes Notify NYC to notify subscribers about missing and vulnerable seniors. We are confident that *Senior Alert*, as it continues to develop, will serve as a benefit and protection to New Yorkers with cognitive impairment and their families.

Senior Alert also is an outgrowth of the Educational Outreach to Families of Missing Persons Initiative an existing City partnership among DFTA, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the New York City Police Department (NYPD) Housing Bureau and the Alzheimer's

Association, New York City Chapter. This group has worked on: (1) educating family caregivers of missing older persons about resources and services including the Alzheimer's Association's Medical Alert/Safe Return program; (2) highlighting NYPD resources applied to searches for missing older adults, and (3) promoting assessment and service linkages for older persons who have been reported missing to the NYPD.

This collaboration, in turn, grew from the Alzheimer's Association's Educational Outreach Initiative with NYCHA and the NYPD. Following discussions between NYPD and DFTA leadership concerning the need to inform and educate the families of older missing persons about services that might reduce the incidence of "wandering" among people with Alzheimer's and other dementias, the NYPD amended its Missing Persons protocol by instituting a Department Order in 2007. The Department Order ensures that information the NYPD gathers on older missing persons is forwarded to DFTA for assessment and service linkages. Social workers at DFTA reach out to those with missing loved ones to discuss the particulars of a given disappearance, Alzheimer's disease and its trajectory, and also present pertinent services for the missing person and their caregiver, including referrals to caregiver and case management agencies in the community. DFTA social workers also distribute booklets on Understanding Alzheimer's Disease and Community Resources for the Alzheimer's Family, and provide contact information for resources in their communities. The City in 2008 received an innovation award for this collaboration from the National Association for Area Agencies on Aging.

Alzheimer's disease, as well as its associated behaviors and care issues, is at the forefront of discussion in the field of aging. An estimated 14 million persons in the U.S. by 2030 will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Families often are the sole caregivers of older adults suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias and many are unaware of resources available to help them address wandering and other challenging/disruptive behaviors. Many also may not know about vital caregiver services such as respite, counseling, support groups and education. DFTA is very supportive of Silver Alert efforts, particularly when used in tandem with these types of caregiver supports. We look forward to continuing our work with the City Council in developing an even stronger public notification system to aid in the recovery of missing older adults who are in imminent risk of danger. It is important that the final legislation incorporate the best practices of the NYPD and OEM. We will also continue our supportive efforts through our Alzheimer's and Caregiver Resource Center through the provision of outreach, education, and service linkages to caregivers of older adults with cognitive impairments.

I would like to thank this Committee and the entire Council for your interest and support in regard to this important issue. I will now take your questions.



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**Testimony presented by Carin Tinney, Policy Analyst for Aging Services
United Neighborhood Houses**

**Before the
NYC Council Aging Committee
Councilmember Jessica Lappin, Chair**

**Hearing on the Silver Alert System for NYC
Wednesday, June 23, 2010**

Good afternoon. Thank you Chair Lappin and members of the Aging Committee for convening this hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Carin Tinney and I am here on behalf of United Neighborhood Houses where I serve as a policy analyst. As you know, United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is the membership organization of New York City settlement houses and community centers. Rooted in the history and values of the settlement house movement, UNH promotes and strengthens the neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live. UNH's membership comprises one of the largest human service systems in New York City, with 39 agencies working at more than 400 sites to provide high quality services and activities to half million New Yorkers each year. UNH supports its members through policy development, advocacy and capacity-building activities. UNH members have a strong commitment to older New Yorkers and the providers who serve them.

I am here today in support of City Council Intro 270 that would create the Silver Alert System which would provide rapid notification to the public when an older adult who has a cognitive disability, such as Alzheimer's disease, is reported missing to a law enforcement agency.

In the United States, one in eight people aged 65 and older (13%) has Alzheimer's disease¹, which would translate to just over 150,000 New Yorkers. Alzheimer disease and other forms of dementia (particularly during the advanced stages) significantly impact a person's ability to cope and function in the community. People with dementia or other cognitive impairment, often do not have the ability to make sound decisions, are not always aware of where they are or what time of day it is; do not always recognize or identify objects like crosswalk signals; and sometimes cannot speak coherently or understand what is being said. Also, about 60% of people with dementia have 'wandering' tendencies, i.e. they walk in a way that seems aimless and confusing to someone without dementia. Why people wander is not always known; it could be to relieve anxiety or relieve

¹ <http://www.alzheimersanddementia.com/article/S1552-5260%2810%2900014-2/abstract>

a feeling of being trapped; it could be to find someone they do not see in front of them (e.g. a spouse that has passed away); or it could be that they saw a door and knew what it was for and just used it. Oftentimes, people with dementia revert back to an old routine, e.g. going to work, and leave their present location to do just that, 'go to work.' But a person's cognitive abilities needed to safely and securely manage the streets of New York are not present and the risk of becoming lost or hurt is high.

At the same time, many adults with dementia (with the help of caregivers, social service providers, family and neighbors) look healthy and can easily 'fit in' on the streets. Unlike a lost child, an adult with dementia would not look outstanding in any way. It's likely, and it has happened, that a man who leaves his apartment in the Bronx can walk to Queens unnoticed. But in the walk, not only is he vulnerable to being preyed upon, he is vulnerable to the elements (e.g. heat, cold, rain, ice, or snow) that he no longer has the ability to cope with and may become dehydrated, develop hypothermia, or get injured in some way.

Even with the best care from family members and the provider community, wandering remains a significant concern- it is estimated that 1 in 6 people with dementia will wander.² It becomes important then that we create systems that allow for a quick response by the community to recognize and safely return someone who has wandered to their home. UNH applauds Chair Lappin and the multitude of sponsors on Intro 270, the Silver Alert Act, in their effort to do just this.

A Silver Alert System is one more step towards helping older New Yorkers remain safely in their homes as they age. It is an incredibly difficult journey to care for a loved one who has dementia in the community and this measure would provide caregivers a tool, a safety net that is not currently in place. UNH supports the City Council in this initiative and requests that there be no age requirement for the Silver Alert System, as Alzheimer's and other dementia related disorders may develop at an earlier age earlier than 65- and these adults are at just as much risk for the negative consequences associated with wandering.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and for supporting this important safety net for the most vulnerable seniors of our City. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/05/us/05search.html>



TESTIMONY
“SILVER ALERT” LEGISLATION

New York City Council

Committee on Aging

Chairperson Jessica Lappin

June 23, 2010

Submitted by:
Jed A. Levine, MA
Executive Vice President, Director of Programs and Services
Elizabeth Santiago
Manager, Safe Return
Alzheimer's Association

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you today to discuss legislation creating a “Silver Alert” to provide protection for older New Yorkers with Alzheimer’s and other dementias. I am Jed Levine, Executive Vice President of the Alzheimer’s Association New York City chapter, founded in 1977.

The Alzheimer's Association strongly supports a comprehensive approach to constructing a *Silver Alert* system addressing the needs of cognitively impaired adults in New York City, and applauds the leadership of Chairperson Lappin, Council Member Arroyo and the Committee on Aging in leading this effort.

Background:

Alzheimer’s disease is a progressive and fatal brain disease, mostly affecting the elderly, which threatens to overwhelm the health care system, if we don’t find a way of preventing, or hopefully curing it one day. Approximately 5.3 million people in the United States are living with Alzheimer’s disease – 5% reside in New York City. That number is expected to grow to as many as 16 million by mid-century. Every 70 seconds someone is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and we expect by 2030 there will be 7.7 million people age 65 and older living with Alzheimer's. The financial ramifications of the disease are daunting and currently cost America \$172 billion.

Today, an estimated 250,000 people in New York City diagnosed with Alzheimer’s or a related dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, are living with losses that are unimaginable to those of us who do not suffer from this illness. This debilitating illness not only robs persons with dementia (PWD’s) of their memory but also causes problems with thinking and behavior severe enough to adversely impact nearly every aspect of their daily lives. The PWD is no longer able to work, enjoy lifelong hobbies or social life. The lives of their family members are profoundly affected

as well. They become increasingly isolated as their caregiving responsibilities escalate.

Alzheimer's and other dementias are one of the leading causes of dependency and disability in older adults.

The Alzheimer's Association, NYC Chapter is on the front lines every day providing a wide variety of educational and support programs including over 125 support groups, a 24 hour helpline and care consultations with professional counselors all designed to assist caregivers, family members and persons with dementia successfully cope with this progressive and terminal illness. We also train home care workers and others to better care for a person with dementia. A major focus for the Chapter is outreach to the Latino, Chinese and African-American communities and other underserved populations.

We have been involved with the protection of cognitively impaired adults who wander for close to two decades. MedicAlert + Safe Return, a program I created in the Chapter in 1990, is a program that provides protection for cognitively and memory impaired individuals who are at risk of wandering and getting lost. 60 – 70 % of all persons with AD will wander at some time during the disease. It is always a serious and life threatening problem. The program provides:

- Outreach and awareness
- Registration in a database that is available 24/7,
- Identifying materials such as a MedicAlert + Safe Return Bracelet, necklace, wallet cards and clothing tags, for the memory impaired individual
- Similar products for their caregiver, so if they are in an emergency, care can be provided for their relative with AD.

- Faxed “Lost Patient” Bulletin to hospital emergency rooms, Medical Examiner’s Offices, Port Authority, Transit Authority, EMS, Shelters for the Homeless, and other emergency responders when a person with dementia goes missing
- Coordinated effort with NYPD
- Support for the family during the episode
- Counseling and care planning after the episode

The program works. **99%** of people, who are registered and wander, are found. If not found within 24 hours, there is a close to 50% chance that cognitively impaired people who go missing will either never be found, be found seriously injured, or deceased. Exposure to extreme weather poses a serious threat to persons with dementia who may forget to eat or drink, and lose the ability to protect themselves from heat, cold, rain, snow and other inclement conditions.

Thanks to previous funding from the New York City Council, including Council Members Quinn, Arroyo, Garodnick, Ignizio and past members of the City Council, we have been able to offer enrollment **free of charge** for any New Yorker who cannot afford the \$54.95 fee. As of June 18, 2010, there were 1,436 New Yorkers newly enrolled in the program in this fiscal year, bringing the total to 14,005 enrolled. Nationwide there are currently over 160,000 individuals enrolled and there have been over 16,000 reunions.

Any Silver Alert system must be interoperable with MedicAlert + Safe Return, including coordination with the MedicAlert + Safe Return team, enrollment mechanisms and tools, and training and education for first responders and public safety personnel about Alzheimer’s and related dementias and the problem of wandering.

A Silver Alert program would be a wonderful compliment to the MedicAlert Safe Return Program, as it would expand the scale of our reach in the community, and build on the relationships that we have established over the years. The MedicAlert + Safe Return Program adds the component of **counseling and support** for the family during the missing person episode. It also adds a **care planning** component after with our professional Care Consultants who work to ensure that there are safeguards and supports in place so that there isn't a repeat incident. Silver Alert systems that work in concert with the Alzheimer's Association and MedicAlert + Safe Return provide the most effective vehicles for assisting adult wanderers and their families.

This program works, just recently, a 73 year old woman was brought in to Jacobi Medical Center by ambulance with a fractured wrist and a head wound. Because she was wearing her MedicAlert + Safe Return bracelet doctors were able to call our nationwide number and retrieve her medical records and contact her family. We also had an 80 year old man who only spoke Korean who wandered from Elmhurst, New York and was found in St. Joseph's Hospital in Bronxville. He was also wearing his identification bracelet. Not only were the doctors able to call the nationwide number and receive his medical history but they were also able to utilize our language line to communicate with the family.

This is an elegantly simple program that saves lives. As you know, many caregivers for persons with dementia are elderly themselves. Our program allows caregivers to purchase an ID bracelet for themselves, in case they are in a medical emergency, the bracelet alerts emergency responders to the fact that there is a person with dementia who needs assistance at home.

We hope to coordinate our efforts and add the resources and considerable experience and expertise of our MedicAlert + Safe Return team when a cognitively impaired senior is missing.

We have enjoyed a productive and cooperative relationship with NYPD since the mid-nineties, when then Commissioner Howard Safir appointed the first detective to work with Safe Return to work with the Alzheimer's Association when a cognitively impaired adult was missing, and to help spread the word in NYPD. Since then we have had the cooperation of a detective at Missing Persons who has been assigned to us, which has been an invaluable asset to the program. In 2000, the Safe Return program was written in to the Patrol Guide, so that when any missing person over 65 or under 65 with Alzheimer's or a related disorder goes missing, the police officer must contact Safe Return to inquire if the individual is enrolled and to coordinate the effort in recovery.

Adding a citywide "Silver Alert" will help save tax dollars and improve use of police and emergency personnel. If it can expedite the recovery of a missing person with cognitive impairment, police can spend more time looking for criminals and terrorists, and less time looking for an elderly missing person with Alzheimer's.

I have one concern about the current legislation which involves the use of the term "Senior Citizen", as a qualifier for initiating the Silver Alert Program. Although AD is primarily a disease of aging, 10% of all persons with Alzheimer's or related dementia are under the age of 65, with a diagnosis of Young-Onset Alzheimer's disease. I hope any legislation for Silver Alert, would be inclusive of this very vulnerable and needy population.

I look forward to working with you on this very exciting project which will provide security for family caregivers and persons with Alzheimer's, save tax dollars and most importantly save lives.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 270 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 6/23/10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Molly Krakowski

Address: 132 W. 31st St. 10th Fl 10001

I represent: JASA

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: 6/23/10

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Name: Deputy Chief Jeremiah Quinlan

Address: C.O., Special Investigations Division

I represent: NYPD

Address: 1 Police Plaza

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Date: 6-23-10

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JED Levine

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I represent: 112th Ann. NYC

Address: 360 Lex Ave

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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Date: Jul 23 10

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Name: Carin Resnick

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I represent: DP TA

Address: _____

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 6/23/2010

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