

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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March 30, 2009

The Honorable Bob Herron, Co-Chair
The Honorable Wes Keller, Co-Chair
House Health & Social Services
Alaska State Capitol, Rooms 415 and 13
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 71

Dear Chair Herron and Chair Keller:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) encourages support of HB 71, a bill that would establish the advance health care directive registry in the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). This legislation requires strict security provisions for releases of information on directives filed in the registry, mandates that the registry be continuously accessible online at all times, and sets out requirements for DHSS to review and remove directives. This bill is sponsored by Representative Holmes and co-sponsored by Representatives Dahlstrom, Millett, and Kawasaki.

An advance health care directive provides a clear statement of an individual's wishes regarding health care at the end of life in the event that a person is unable to voice these preferences directly. Advanced health care directives are important for all adults, not just the elderly, and relieve others, especially family members, from making critical medical care decisions for their loved one under emotional distress.

The establishment of a confidential advance health care registry would allow Alaskans to voluntarily file their directives with the DHSS, and to change or revoke them at will. The registry would allow health care facilities to have Internet access to their patients' directives on-demand 24-hours a day, wherever the Alaskan patient is receiving care, in or outside of the State. ACoA endorses this legislation because we believe that an electronic advanced health care directive registry would enhance protection of an Alaskan's end of life health care preferences by improving access to this information by their health care provider in a time-critical manner.

HB 71 also allows the DHSS to charge a fee to individuals participating in the registry. ACoA asks that the legislature consider a fee waiver for persons of modest income who by paying this fee would incur undue hardship.

ACoA supports HB 71 and respectfully asks that the Legislature consider support for this bill as well. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

CC: Representative John Coghill
Representative Sharon Cissna
Representative Lindsey Holmes

CC: Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Paul Seaton