

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

April 5, 2009

The Honorable Bettye Davis, Chair
Senate Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 172

Dear Chair Davis:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) respectfully asks for your support of SB 172, a bill to establish the Alaska Health Care Commission in the Department of Health and Social Services. This legislation is authored by Senator Donald Olson.

The purpose of the Alaska Health Care Commission is to provide recommendations for and to facilitate development of a statewide health plan to address the quality, accessibility, and availability of health care for all Alaskans in a cost-effective manner. ACoA supports the establishment of a state commission to comprehensively and systematically address the multitude of issues related to improving health care services, including preventative care and chronic disease management within the primary care setting, through collaboration with public and private partners.

Older Alaskans are among the largest consumer groups of health care services of all age categories. Access to primary care is of top concern for many Alaska seniors insured by Medicare who are challenged to find a primary care physician particularly if they live in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Mat-Su Borough. Limited access to essential health care services for older individuals can put these persons at greater health risk who may postpone the care they need from a provider only when their medical conditions become serious. In addition, workforce shortages of health care workers, particularly nurses and doctors, is another serious problem that affects all Alaskans and is a critical need for people 65 years and older. These are examples of issues that ACoA would like to see addressed by the Alaska Health Care Commission.

ACoA supports SB 172. We would also appreciate your consideration of including a seat on the Alaska Health Care Commission to represent the health care concerns of older Alaskans. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position or request assistance from our office. Thank you for your consideration of support for SB 172.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

CC: Senator Joe Paskvan, Vice-Chair
Senator Joe Thomas
Senator Fred Dyson
Senator Johnny Ellis

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

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