

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110693
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0693
PHONE: (907) 465-3250
FAX: (907) 465-1398

March 13, 2012

The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Co- Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 203, Energy Assistance Program & Vouchers

Dear Chair Hoffman and Chair Stedman:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support of SB 203, a bill to establish an energy assistance program that would issue an energy voucher to all Alaskan Permanent Fund Dividend recipients. SB 203 is an interim measure to help Alaskans manage their high utility bills until more affordable energy supplies come on line. SB 203 also requires the Executive Branch to evaluate and make recommendations for a cost efficient and effective energy assistance program to be instituted by FY2014. This legislation is sponsored by Senator Joe Thomas and co-sponsored by Senators Paskvan, Ellis, Olson, Egan, Wagoner, French, Kookesh and you, Senator Hoffman.

The price of heating fuel is expensive but especially hard felt by Alaskans on a fixed income. As the price of heating fuel increases, older Alaskans spend more of their fixed incomes on heating their homes, especially Elders who live in rural and remote communities where energy costs are the highest. During the winter, seniors often spend much of their day at home. Older adults typically experience cooler body temperatures than younger people. Many live in older and sometimes drafty homes that are less energy efficient and poorly insulated. In order to save money, some seniors turn down their thermostats way low and may even resort to closing off rooms during the winter or more dangerous practices such as using their kitchen stoves for heat. They also cut back on food and prescription medication expenditures, measures that can compromise their health and quality of life.

ACoA supports SB 203 and believes that this program will help all Alaskans with their heating bills, especially older Alaskans. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director, by phone (465-4879) or email (denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Ellis
Senator McGuire

Senator Egan
Senator Thomas

Senator Olson