



**Alaska Geriatric Exchange Network**  
An Association of Advocates and Service Providers for Older Alaskans

February 23, 2012

Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair Senate Finance Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Stedman,

AGENET, with over forty agency members that provide services to Older Alaskans, is requesting your support of SB179, which would establish a “Silver Alert” response system in the state of Alaska. This prompt response and notification system would be an effective way to assist in finding vulnerable older adults who may wander due to Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias.

Today, more than 6,000 Alaskans have Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. Wandering is a common behavior in people with dementia and up to 60% of people affected may wander, just once or on a recurring basis. Over the years, several cases of wandering in Alaska have resulted in injury or death because it took too long to find the person. In the harsh Alaska winter, a case of wandering has a higher probability of resulting in a poor outcome or even become rapidly fatal for the person involved.

Some programs in Alaska can educate families about wandering behaviors and can recommend strategies to keep the person as safe as possible. However, with the number of people currently affected and that number expected to double in the next 10 years, some of these cases of wandering are likely to occur. SB 179 outlines a strategy that would help find the person who wanders more quickly and hopefully avoid injury or death.

AGENET would like to express its support of SB 179 and urge you to hear this bill in the near future and move it on to the full body of the Senate. We understand that it has zero fiscal notes, because it uses the same system already used for “Amber Alerts.”

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

  
Connie J. Sipe  
President of AGENET

cc: Senator Betty Davis