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February 18, 2011

The Honorable Hollis French, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 417
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 86 (Governor Parnell)--Support

Dear Chair French:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee to support SB 86, sponsored by the Senate Rules Committee at the request of Governor Parnell.

The aging of Alaska's population, particularly the growth in the numbers of our citizens over age 75, presents unique challenges for our criminal justice system.

The National Center on Elder Abuse indicates that 23.4% of substantiated reports of mistreatment of older adults were financial exploitation, another 17% was physical abuse, and 32.5% was caregiver neglect. Emotional/verbal/psychological abuse accounted for 23.6% of the substantiated reports and sexual abuse/other accounted for 3.6%.

Elder abuse occurs without reference to race, religion, income, education, place of residence, or living arrangement. It is real and, unfortunately, all too common.

Detecting and preventing elder abuse involves increasing awareness among the general public and professionals.

Although SB 86 addresses the problems of abuse and exploitation on minors, we will focus on the benefits that we perceive will help older Alaskans.

The bill identifies "mandated reporters." This is very significant and will undoubtedly stop people from "looking the other way" and will also protect them from reporting incidents that might involve supervisory staff over them.

SB 86 also creates vehicles for new emergency procedures to allow courts to immediately protect individuals from financial abuse with temporary conservators and financial protective orders.

Unfortunately there are incidents of trusted advisors like guardians, agents under durable power of attorney, and other fiduciaries who have also committed elder abuse. Adding the concept of "undue influence" should help address this issue.

SB 86 also requires cooperation with Adult Protective Services, DHSS training of investigators, and mandates release of relevant financial and health records necessary for an investigation.

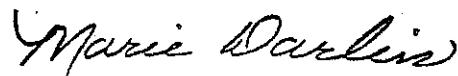
Will SB 86 prevent all elder abuse? No. But it will go a long way in preventing it and punishing those who commit it. It's a strong bill that will help vulnerable older Alaskans, younger Alaskans with disabilities, and minors.

AARP requests an "AYE" vote on SB 86.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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