

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman

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February 18, 2011

Senators French, Wielechowski, Paskvan, McGuire, and Coghill
Alaska State 27th Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK

Re: SB 86 "Protection of vulnerable adults"

Dear Senators:

The Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints made by, or on behalf of, older Alaskans in long term care facilities. In the first seven months of FY 2011, our office received 13 complaints alleging financial exploitation of seniors in assisted living or nursing homes. These cases can involve a family member or caregiver

- exerting undue influence over a senior's decision-making to access bank accounts.
- charging the senior for services and goods he or she did not receive.
- failing to provide a senior with needed care, so as to save the "family" inheritance, or
- forcing a senior to sign over deeds on houses or land.

While 13 cases may not seem significant, even a few instances of exploitation of seniors can lead to hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost assets.

The frustrating thing about these cases is that the exploitation happens so quickly that the State cannot step in fast enough to preserve the seniors' assets. Not only is it wrong for seniors to be taken advantage of in this way, but once the seniors' assets are gone, Medicaid or General Relief pick up the cost of the care. The State is essentially footing the bill for these losses.

I support SB 86, especially the provisions for financial protective orders, emergency conservatorships, and the addition of "undue influence" as a reportable harm. I hope you will give your support to this bill and protect our older Alaskans from financial predators.

Sincerely,



Diana Weber, MS
State of Alaska Long Term Care Ombudsman
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Anchorage, AK 99508