



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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February 7, 2013

Representative Lindsey Holmes
Alaska Capitol, Room 415
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 44, Registry for Advance Health Care Directives

Dear Representative Holmes:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) supports HB 44, a bill to establish the advance health care directive registry in the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS). This legislation requires strict security provisions for releases of information in directives filed in the registry, mandates the registry be continuously accessible online at all times, and sets out requirements for DHSS to review and remove directives, as necessary. This bill is authored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Millett, Josephson, Peggy Wilson and Kerttula.

Advance health care directives are part of the continuum of protection for vulnerable adults when they are no longer able to make their needs known due to physical or cognitive impairments. An advance directive provides a clear statement of an individual's wishes regarding health care at the end of life in the event that a person is unable to voice these preferences directly. Advance care directives promote family conversations about end of life care. They are important for all adults, not just the elderly, and relieve others, especially family members, from making critical medical care decisions for their loved one under emotional distress.

The establishment of a confidential advance health care registry would allow Alaskans to voluntarily file their directives with the DHSS, and to change or revoke them at will. The registry would allow health care facilities to have Internet access to their patients' directives on-demand 24-hours a day, wherever the Alaskan patient is receiving care, in- or outside the State. ACoA endorses this legislation because we believe an electronic advanced health care directive registry will enhance protection of an Alaskan's end of life health care preferences by improving access to this information by their health care provider in a time-critical manner, which is especially important to the growing number of families providing long-distance caregiving.

HB 44 allows DHSS to charge a fee to individuals participating in the registry. ACoA asks that the Legislature consider a fee waiver for persons of modest income who by paying this fee would incur undue hardship.

Thank you for your support of this legislation. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position.

Sincerely,


Paula Pawlowski
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,


Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director