Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse



ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE

431 North Franklin Street, Suite 200 Juneau, Alaska 99801 (907) 465-8920

Alaska Mental Health Board

February 20, 2015

Senator Lesil McGuire Alaska State Legislature Capitol Building, Room 121 Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 49 – Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Senator McGuire,

On behalf of the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I would like to express our support for SB 49. We appreciate your championing of legal services for Alaska's indigent and vulnerable citizens. For individuals experiencing mental health and substance use disorders, these non-profit public interest firms are often the only source of legal assistance. SB 49 preserves access to justice for Alaskans who do not always have a voice, and reinforces the Alaskan value of taking care of our neighbors in need.

Alaska Legal Services, the Disability Law Center, and other public interest law firms provide services imperative to the health and safety of vulnerable Alaskans. Without the high quality services offered by their lawyers, paralegals, advocates and staff, many veterans, seniors, victims of violence, and people experiencing disabilities would be left alone and without recourse when faced with unfair or unjust treatment.

The Boards support SB 49 and the additional financial support for civil legal services providers serving indigent, elderly, and disabled clients. We appreciate your advocacy on behalf of these agencies, but more importantly, on behalf of their clients and the entire justice system in Alaska.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart Executive Director

cc: Joe Dingman, chairperson, Alaska Mental Health Board Bob Coghill, chairperson, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Nikole Nelson, executive director, Alaska Legal Services Corporation David Fleurant, executive director, Disability Law Center