



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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March 17, 2017

Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senate Health and Social Services
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 83, Protect Vulnerable Adults/Long Term Care

Dear Senator Wilson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging offers our support for SB 83, a technical bill by request of the Governor, to align state statutes with new federal law and regulations concerning the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OLTCO). According to its mission statement, the OLTCO advocates to protect the rights, health, safety, and welfare of vulnerable Alaskans who reside in Alaska's long-term care facilities that include nursing homes and assisted living homes.

We believe that the changes being proposed in SB 83 will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the OLTCO by: (1) Clarifying the difference in the roles of agencies (Adult Protective Services, Residential Licensing, and Health Care Facilities Licensing) within the Department of Health and Social Services and the OLTCO that respond to complaints involving vulnerable Alaskans who reside in long-term care facilities; (2) identifying the Vulnerable Adult Central Intake Office as the official repository for reports of harm; (3) removing the option for mandatory reporters to meet reporting requirements by submitting their reports to the OLTCO; (4) clarifying that the OLTCO may investigate and resolve complaints of residents in long-term care facilities who are younger than age 60; and (5) allowing the OLTCO in certain circumstances to share resident information with other agencies when the resident is unable to provide consent and has no representative to provide consent. These proposed amendments will ensure that the OLTCO can focus on the needs of residents living in long-term care facilities to the satisfaction of the resident.

The projected population growth of Alaska's senior population will increase demand on our state's long-term care infrastructure and the provision of high quality services delivered in safe living settings. In FFY2016, the OLTCO reported making 740 unannounced visits to senior assisted living homes in addition to all 18 nursing facilities. Although their staff is small, the OLTCO was able to accomplish this act by increasing the number of trained volunteer ombudsmen who are able to respond to complaints.

The Alaska Commission on Aging partners with the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman on many projects related to the health and safety of Alaskans age 60 years and older. Regarding planning activities, the OLTCO has served on advisory committees with the Commission to develop and implement the Alaska State Plan for Senior Services and Alaska's Roadmap to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia. We have also advocated for legislation to improve protection for seniors who use Power of Attorney documents and on policy initiatives for guardianship reform. We look forward to our continued partnership with the OLTCO to identify and resolve issues that directly affect the lives of older Alaskans.

For further information about our position, please contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Blacketer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denise Daniello". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Natasha von Imhof, Vice Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel, Member
Senator Peter Micciche, Member
Senator Tom Begich, Member