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Alaska Deaf Council

April 7, 2017

Senator Mia Costello
State Capitol Room 504
Juneau, AK 99801

Via email: Senator.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov

RE: SB80, An Act Relating to Telecommunications Services for Certain Disabled Subscribers

Dear Senator Costello,

The Alaska Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Council has a core mission to:

Promote and empower Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deafblind consumers in order to achieve the highest quality of life possible in communities of Alaska.

The "Act Relating to Telecommunications Services for Certain Disabled Subscribers," **SB80**, you sponsored and introduced is an important piece of legislation that promotes and exemplifies The Alaska Deaf Council's mission. As President of the ADC, I confidently express full support for SB80, and thank you, your staff, the Regulatory Commission of Alaska, and Commissioner Rokeberg for filing this bill. Ensuring accessibility to telecommunications keeps pace with modern technology and our evolving digital age is immensely important and critical for many users of telecommunications relay services. Deaf and speech disabled users of telecommunications services do not need to be left behind in the analog world, and SB80 is a key to making sure the system welcomes this subscriber group to the digital age and continues to ensure accessibility to telecommunications systems in Alaska now and into the future.

I strongly urge your honorable colleagues in the Alaska Senate and the House, to pass SB80 and send it to the Governor to become law without hesitation. Thank you again for sponsoring this legislation to improve the lives of thousands of Alaskans.

Very truly yours,

/s/Dean Gates
ADC President

Cc: ADC Board, Commissioner Rokeberg



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

Senior and Disabilities Services
Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special
Education
Patrick J. Reinhart, Executive Director

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April 3, 2017

RE: SB 80 Letter of Support

Dear Senator Costello:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the "Council") fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on bills that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

The Council would like to extend its support for SB 80. Your sponsorship of this bill is greatly appreciated as we feel that it will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities.

For individuals with disabilities who are deaf or hard of hearing communication by phone is difficult or impossible without the existence of relay services. This bill, based on our understanding of its purpose, is to spread the cost of paying for a relay service to all telecommunication devices. Currently, fees to pay for the system, which we absolutely must have, are paid for only by persons with "land-lines" and mobile users are not required to pay into the system. The original law did not anticipate how many households would give up their land lines in favor of mobile phones, and the resulting decline of household lines has decreased the financial support structure of the relay service. It is also our understanding and hopes that with a broader user base as envisioned by this bill, that the cost to support the service would drop significantly on a per user basis.

The Council strongly supports SB 80 and the finances it would provide to enhance the communication for people with disabilities and the hard of hearing. Thank you for working to ensure that the Alaska telecommunication system is fully accessible to all of the residents of this great state.

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Amy Simpson in blue ink.

Amy Simpson, Chair

Handwritten signature of Art Delaune in blue ink.

Art Delaune, Legislative Chair