

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110693
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0693
PHONE: (907) 465-3250
FAX: (907) 465-1398

March 5, 2012

Representative Bob Lynn
Alaska State Capitol, Room 108
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 275, Coverage for Colorectal Screening and Encouragement of Public Retiree Use of Generic Prescription Drugs

Dear Representative Lynn:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) supports passage of HB 275, a bill to require state and municipal governments to include coverage for colorectal screening and to encourage public retiree use of generic prescription drugs. This bill is sponsored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Gara, Miller, Peggy Wilson, Muñoz, and Thompson.

Encouraging use of generic prescriptions is not only good public policy but is cost effective with the savings potentially going toward covering the cost of colorectal screening.

According to research conducted by the National Cancer Institute, age is a significant risk factor that positively correlates with an increased chance of developing colorectal cancer for persons ages 50 years and older. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the nation after lung cancer. Screening for colorectal cancer has been demonstrated to be effective in the prevention of this disease as well as being critical for early diagnosis that allows for treatment before the disease has had the opportunity to spread.

While Medicare covers the cost of colorectal screening for beneficiaries, such as retired persons who are 65 years and older, state and other public health care insurance plans for retirees do not always provide this coverage. Public service retirees younger than age 65 and ineligible for Medicare are not covered for this procedure under state and certain local government health insurance plans.

ACoA supports this legislation to include health care coverage for colorectal screening for public service retirees who are not insured by their existing plans and to encourage public retiree use of generic prescription drugs. Both aspects of this bill make good economic and health sense. Cancer screening is critical for prevention and effective early treatment. It is a proven cost saving measure that is essential for maintaining good health and reducing the need for high cost health care services related to cancer treatment.

Thank you for your work on HB 275. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director, by phone (465-4879) or email (denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,

Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director