

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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March 12, 2012

The Honorable Bill Wielechowski, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 101
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 208, Disaster Planning and Services

Dear Chair Wielechowski:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support of SB 208, a bill to establish a comprehensive intrastate mutual aid system (IMAS) that would allow all political subdivisions to transcend their jurisdictional boundaries to receive and render aid to other political subdivisions in the event of disasters and emergencies. This legislation is authored by Senator Joe Paskvan. We believe that this legislation is good public policy that will provide for a consistent and integrated mutual aid system to ensure an effective response in disaster situations.

Older persons with health problems are among the most vulnerable of Alaska's residents. When an emergency or natural disaster occur, they are the most likely to suffer from the direct impact of the force. Many have physical or cognitive impairments that limit their ability to respond and seek help. Frail older persons with special health problems on medication, equipment, or who have mobility needs are at heightened risk during a disaster and require special assistance to get to places offering food and emergency shelter. The horrific experiences of Hurricane Katrina and the loss of life of older adults who were abandoned in nursing homes and assisted living facilities highlight the need to improve disaster response preparedness and planning for vulnerable populations.

Disasters know no political boundaries. They can happen at any time, in any place, and to any one. SB 208 provides an integrated and structured framework to provide efficient and effective emergency aid and relief to older Alaskans and all Alaskan residents when the unthinkable strikes. Thank you for your consideration and support of SB 208. 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

Cc: Senator Joe Paskvan, Vice Chair
Senator Albert Kookesh

Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator Kevin Meyer