

Alaska Telecom Association

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Christine O'Connor
Executive Director

March 5, 2018

The Honorable Mia Costello
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee
State Capitol, Beltz 105
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: SB80 Telecommunications for Disabled Subscribers

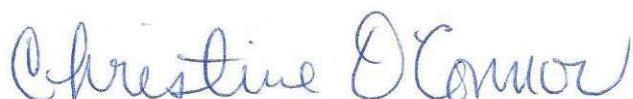
Dear Chair Costello,

Alaska Telecom Association supports SB80 Telecommunications for Disabled Subscribers. SB80 provides important improvements and modernization of Alaska's Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) program which supports access for disabled subscribers.

The TRS program has a strong history of providing access for Alaskans who have hearing impairment, are deaf, blind or have other impediments to using telecommunications. SB80 expands the program to allow qualifying subscribers to use modern equipment which has more capability to provide effective communications. It also expands the contribution base to ensure the TRS program is on a strong financial foundation and will continue to allow all Alaskans to make a call, regardless of their unique abilities.

ATA is proud to support the TRS program and SB80 to improve access to telecommunications services for all Alaskans.

Respectfully submitted,



Christine O'Connor
Executive Director



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

3601 C Street, Suite 740
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Main: 907.269.8990
Fax: 907.269.8995

March 14, 2018

RE: SB 80 Letter of Support

Dear Representative Kito:

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 telephone 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 deaf or 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,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Maggie Winston.

Maggie Winston, Chair

A stylized, handwritten signature of Art Delaune.

Art Delaune, Legislative Chair



THE STATE
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Maggie Winston, Chair

A stylized, handwritten signature of Art Delaune.

Art Delaune, Legislative Chair

From: [Edric Carrillo](#)
To: [Caitlyn Ellis](#)
Subject: FW: House L&C hearing on SB80 - my testimony
Date: Wednesday, March 14, 2018 5:06:30 PM

From: Dean Gates [mailto:deanesq4@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2018 4:54 PM
To: Rep. Chris Birch <Rep.Chris.Birch@akleg.gov>; Rep. Adam Wool <Rep.Adam.Wool@akleg.gov>; Rep. Sam Kito <Rep.Sam.Kito@akleg.gov>
Cc: Wilson, Tiffany <tiffany@atlaak.org>; alaskadeafcouncil <alaskadeafcouncil@googlegroups.com>
Subject: House L&C hearing on SB80 - my testimony

Honorable Representatives Kito, Wool and Birch,

Thank you again for holding the hearing on SB80 in the House L&C committee earlier today, and at the end voting it out of committee with a recommendation to pass (if I understood correctly). This important bill is fairly straightforward and brings the Alaska telecommunications relay services into the 21st century with its amendments.

I testified over the telephone, calling in using video Relay Services where a sign language interpreter translated my signs to voice. A friend who listened to the hearing informed me the interpreter struggled with some of the words and terminology in my testimony, and she emailed me some of those misinterpretations:

- Alaska Deaf Council ... not Alaska Deaf Coalition. I'm president of the ADC.
- sometimes the interpreter said "total communications" but my signs meant to say "telecommunications" ... the signs are pretty similar.
- I am not sure if any of the substance of my testimony was "lost in translation" but it is generally of the same nature as in the letter of support from ADC in the documents attached to SB80, and attached here for your convenience.

Finally, I heard Rep. Birch ask about the text-to-voice and speech-to-text technology, as another alternative to the sign-to-voice TRS service I used when I testified.

The Alaska Relay Service does have a CapTel equipment program and that technology is quite effective and continuously improving. No sign language knowledge needed. I understand that it is very popular with elderly Alaskans who are losing their hearing and know no sign language, and struggle to hear on the phone even with hearing aids. Here's some information on that device and its availability:

<http://www.alaskarelay.com/get-captel%C2%AE-phone>
http://www.alaskarelay.com/sites/ak_relay/files/alaska_captel_stress_free_flyer.pdf
<https://www.atlaak.org/solutions/deafness-and-hard-of-hearing/>

Thank you again, keep up the great work for Alaska during this session!

Best regards,
Dean Gates



[ADC Ltr of Support - SB80 Telecomm bill](#)