THE STATE of ALASKA
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Health and Social Services
ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
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February 3, 2015

Representative Mike Hawker
Alaska Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Regarding: ACoA Support HB 5, Conservator of a Protected Person

Dear Representative Hawker:

The Alaska Commission on Aging is pleased to express our support for HB 5, as authored by you and co-sponsored by Representative Shelley Hughes, to expand the pool of persons for individuals and families currently allowed by statute who require a court-appointed conservator to manage the estate of a protected person. Based on our understanding, HB 8 does not alter the current judicial process for appointing a conservator or diminish the court's authority to appoint a person who would act in the best interests of the protected person.

The Commission believes that this legislation offers a common sense approach for individuals and families requiring this service who often find themselves in a stressful and demanding situation of having to find a conservator who qualifies under current law particularly during times when a health crisis impairs a loved one to the extent that the person is unable to provide for their own health and safety. For a senior who has outlived their spouse, parents, or child or who has never married and had children having additional options to choose from to fill the conservator role provides greater flexibility and choice for that individual. Further, we would like to call your attention to the needs of older Alaskans and other adults who may live in non-traditional families and choose to live permanently outside of marriage. These Alaskans also require similar legal protection and flexibility to identify a trustee regarding the management of their estate affairs.

The Commission supports HB 5 and appreciates your sponsorship of this legislation that promotes greater flexibility in the criteria used to identify a conservator and helps families act in their own best interest by allowing relatives by law or adoption to serve as conservators.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Shields
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Dēnise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Shelley Hughes