

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
Alaska Mental Health
Trust Authority

MIKE DUNLEAVY, GOVERNOR

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Senate Judiciary Committee
Alaska State Capital
Juneau, Alaska 99811

The State of Alaska, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is pleased to offer support for *SB 190*, “An Act relating to guardianships, conservatorships, and other protective arrangements; relating to the public guardian; relating to the crime of violating a protective order; amending the Alaska Rules of Probate Procedure; and Rule 77 (c), Alaska Rules of Civil Procedure; and providing for an effective date.”

The mission of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman’s (LTCO) office is to provide resident-centered advocacy designed to protect the rights, health, safety, and welfare of Alaskans living in long-term care facilities. We fulfill our mission by advocating for person-centered care, investigating and resolving complaints to the satisfaction of the residents and the residents’ representative, informing residents and family members of their rights, and regularly visiting long-term care facilities across the State of Alaska.

As a member of the WINGs committee, it was apparent that Alaska’s laws around guardianship could be strengthened. The work of that committee was to highlight areas of the current guardianship laws that needed to be updated to include prioritizing an individual’s rights, preferences, dignity, and well-being. The LTCO program is excited that the proposed changes to the current law provides for the unique opportunity to consider the least-restrictive alternatives to guardianship. It also encourages flexibility in guardianship, reflecting a person’s independence and their right to make decisions affecting their lives to the largest extent possible. This bill also highlights and clarifies the roles of family members, guardians ad litem, attorneys, and court visitors. The bill considers limits on the use and duration of emergency guardianship opportunities to promote certainty and stability and reinforces guardianship planning so supports can evolve as individuals’ needs change, which is an important concept in person-centered care.

Thank you for proposing changes to the guardianship statutes as recommended in *SB 190*. These proposed changes will create a more efficient system that better meets the needs of vulnerable Alaskans in our communities.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Wheeler

Stephanie Wheeler, PhD
State of Alaska, Long-Term Ombudsman Program