

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

April 6, 2009

The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
The Honorable Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Rooms 518 and 516
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR

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APR - 7 2009

Subject: Support for SB 133

Dear Chair Hoffman and Chair Stedman:

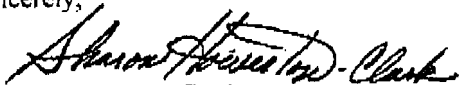
The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) respectfully asks for your support of SB 133, a bill to establish a statewide electronic health information exchange system that would modernize the current paper-based system and allow health care providers quick access to patient health care records, reducing medical errors and enhancing cost effectiveness. This legislation is authored by Senator Joe Paskvan and co-sponsored by Senator Bettye Davis.

The benefits of an electronic health care information exchange system are significant and would contribute substantially to the State's goals to improve safety, cost effectiveness, and quality of health care in Alaska. An electronic information exchange system provides the means for individual Alaskans to have their own personal health records accessible to all health care providers so that providers can make medical decisions in a timely and secure manner in the location where medical services are delivered. The electronic exchange system will support telemedicine services including the transfer of high resolution images for patient care and video conferencing between providers and between providers and patients which are particularly important for patients living in rural Alaskan communities. SB 133 also provides for the implementation of a secure infrastructure that follows federal standards and requires patient consent to insure maximum protection of patient confidentiality and their medical records.

For older Alaskans, an electronic health information system will help to enhance the management of chronic diseases and improve health outcomes by increasing the availability of complete patient health information to ensure appropriate care and use of evidence-based health care services. An electronic health information system can also help to facilitate patient education in self-management of health conditions and potentially provide a means for personal health records to be connected to the electronic medical record system – including prescription records, lab results, schedules of medical appointments, and patient diaries of reported symptoms, side effects related to medicine, and other related information.

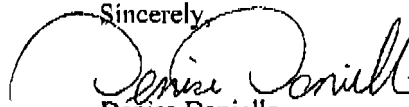
ACoA is pleased to support SB 133 and appreciates your consideration of this bill. We believe that an electronic health care information system will serve all Alaskans well, including older Alaskans who are among the largest consumers of health care services. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position or request assistance from our office. Thank you for your consideration of support for this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

CC: Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Charlie Huggins

CC: Senator Donald Olson
Senator Joe Thomas



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The Honorable Lyman Hoffman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Bert Stedman, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 133 (Paskvan)—Support

Dear Co-Chairs Hoffman and Stedman:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate Finance Committee to support SB 133, authored by Senator Joe Paskvan and co-sponsored by Senator Bettye Davis.

AARP has been collaborating with a group of organizations and medical leaders for several years to determine how Alaska can develop electronic medical record systems in medical offices and an electronic health record exchange network to connect clinics, hospitals, labs, pharmacies, insurers, the State of Alaska and other related health and medical providers that need to have quick access to accurate records.

SB 133 will establish an electronic health information exchange system.

AARP strongly supports this effort.

We believe electronic medical records will save overall costs as well as significantly reduce medical errors. In addition, electronic medical records will also lead to the more effective use of personal health records to increase consumers' engagement in their health care. Electronic records can take advantage of technology to facilitate patient education and self-management, permit secure messaging reminders, allow patients to maintain diaries, eg., of pain, symptoms and side effects, and to obtain prescription refills, schedule medical appointments online, and track medical test results. Ideally these personal health records will be connected to the electronic medical record system.

Even if all an electronic health information exchange accomplished was a reduction in medical errors, that goal alone is worth pursuing in Alaska.

Some proponents of setting up such an exchange system believe such a network could be the biggest advance in medicine since the discovery of penicillin. A network like this in Alaska has the potential to save hundreds, if not thousands, of lives and save millions of dollars by eliminating duplicate tests, shortening hospital stays, improving care for chronically ill patients, and guaranteeing accurate prescribing.

The collaboration on this issue that we have already witnessed in Alaska gives us confidence that the system will work and work well. Some of our "best and brightest" are committed to accomplishing this for Alaska citizens and health consumers.

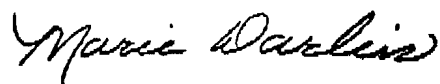
AARP members, more than any other age group, are consumers of health care. We believe SB 133 is in the best interests of our members as well as their families.

AARP is pleased to lend our strong support to SB 133.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Marie Darlin, Coordinator
AARP Capital City Task Force
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586-3637 (voice)
463-3580 (fax)

CC: Senator Charlie Huggins
Senator Donald Olson
Senator Joe Thomas
Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Joe Paskvan