

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

### Alaska Commission on Aging

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February 2, 2010

Senator Donald Olson  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 514  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 172

Dear Senator Olson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support of SB 172 authored by you to extend the life of the Alaska Health Care Commission in the Department of Health and Social Services until 2014 with responsibilities to plan and implement strategies related to health care reform for all Alaskans across the life span.

As you know, the Alaska Health Care Commission was first established by Governor Palin in December 2008 to develop a statewide health plan and provide recommendations to address the quality, accessibility, and availability of health care for all Alaskans. We agree with the Commission's findings that the high cost of health care and access to primary care present serious challenges for our state. ACoA supports establishment of a state commission to comprehensively examine the multitude of issues related to improving health care services including improving access to affordable primary care in addition to promoting strategies for preventative care and chronic disease management.

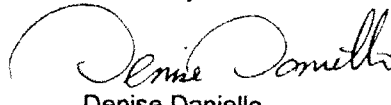
Older Alaskans represent one of the largest consumer groups of health care services of all age categories. Access to primary care is of utmost concern for many Alaska seniors insured by Medicare who are challenged to find a physician particularly if they live in Anchorage, Fairbanks or the Mat-Su Borough. Limited access to essential health care services for older individuals can put these persons at greater health risk who may postpone going to a provider for the care they need only when their medical conditions become serious. Workforce shortages of health care workers, particularly doctors and nurses, pose a serious problem that affects all Alaskans and has a critical impact on people 65 years and older. The ACoA is pleased that these issues were identified in the Alaska Health Care Commission Report (2009) and look forward to working with the Health Care Commission to implement the Commission's recommendations.

We support SB 172 to extend the Alaska Health Care Commission. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879) should you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

  
Sharon Howerton-Clark  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

  
Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director