

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 110693  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811-0693  
PHONE: (907) 465-3250  
FAX: (907) 465-1398

### Alaska Commission on Aging

April 6, 2012

The Honorable Bob Lynn, Chair  
House State Affairs Committee  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 108  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

**Subject: Support for SB 179, Missing Vulnerable Adult Prompt Response Plan**

Dear Chair Lynn:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for SB 179 to establish a vulnerable adult prompt response and notification plan by the Department of Public Safety in cooperation with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. SB 179, authored by Senator Bettye Davis, has a \$0 fiscal note. Although this legislation addresses the problems of all vulnerable missing adults, our support letter will focus on the benefits we perceive for vulnerable older Alaskans from this legislation.

Wandering is one of the most significant personal safety risks faced by individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD). According to the Alzheimer's Association (2011), nearly 60% of people with Alzheimer's disease wander at some point during the course of their disease with approximately one-half of all wanderings resulting in personal injury if the person is not found within 24 hours. For an elder living in a rural and remote community, especially in the wintertime, getting lost has life and death consequences.

As part of our efforts to learn more about the needs of people with ADRD and their caregivers, the ACoA hosted two Community Forums at the Anchorage Senior Citizens Activities Center (December 2011) and at the Juneau Senior Center (February 2012). Both forums were well-attended with the majority of participants being family and professional caregivers. Improving public response services to reduce safety risks for persons with ADRD who wander was identified as a priority concern by the Forum participants. While Anchorage's "Project Lifesaver," administered by Search and Rescue is an effective program for individuals with Alzheimer's disease, this program is available in Anchorage only with limited programs of this kind available statewide.


The ACoA supports SB 179 to authorize the Department of Public Safety to work with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to develop a missing vulnerable adult response plan that will improve the safety of vulnerable Alaskans, such as individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. Thank you for your support of this legislation. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director, by phone (465-4879) or email ([denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov)) should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Wes Keller  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Max Gruenberg  
Representative Pete Petersen

Representative Kyle Johansen  
Senator Bettye Davis, Sponsor