

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

February 14, 2011

Representative Bryce Edgmon
Representative Bob Herron
Representative Neal Foster
Representative Reggie Joule
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

SEAN PARNELL, GOVERNOR

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Subject: Support for HB 65

Dear Representatives Edgmon, Herron, Foster, and Joule:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for HB 65, a bill sponsored by you and co-sponsored by Representative Peggy Wilson, to expand the list of eligible applicants for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's (AHFC) Senior Citizens Housing Development Fund (SCHDF) to include regional housing authorities in addition to municipalities, 501(c)3 and (4) nonprofit organizations. The SCHDF program is used specifically to increase the number of senior housing units for older Alaskans and to address the needs of a growing Alaska senior population whose incomes are in the low to moderate range. The SCHDF is a flexible funding tool that provides gap financing for the construction of mixed-income housing projects for older Alaskans and supports a variety of development needs. The ACoA endorses the inclusion of regional housing authorities as eligible applicants to increase the availability of quality and affordable senior housing to benefit older Alaskans in every region of the state, including rural and remote areas.

Alaska is the state with the fastest growing senior population. Currently, there are more than 85,000 Alaska seniors age 60 years and older representing 12.3% of the state's population, a 52.6% increase since 2001. The population of Alaskan seniors increased nearly seven percent in the most recent year alone. All nine regions recognized by the Department of Health and Social Services experienced an increase in their senior populations of at least 20% over the last eight years.

Having a safe, comfortable, and accessible home fulfills a basic human need which becomes even more important as a person ages and develops frailties. Alaska has a statewide shortage of accessible, affordable housing options for seniors. The waiting list for AHFC's senior/disabled housing has grown by 70% in the past two years. In addition, 15-16% of Alaska's homeless population is estimated to be people age 55 years and older.


The ACoA supports passage of HB 65 to make these funds available for development of senior housing in rural and remote regions that are not adequately served by this program. Looking forward, we recognize that there will be an increased demand for additional funds for the SCHDF to meet the accelerating need of the growing Alaska senior population as well as to pay for higher construction costs related to

inflation and development in rural and remote communities. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information about our position. Thank you for your support of HB 65 and for recognizing the critical need to develop additional quality senior housing in Alaska.

Sincerely,


Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,


Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Peggy Wilson