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February 15, 2013

Senator Johnny Ellis  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 7  
Juneau, AK 99801

Senator Ellis,

I write to you in support of Senate Bill 36, which would establish a response plan for missing vulnerable adults in Alaska. Passage of this legislation is a priority for our organization, as it would provide crucial security for adults with Alzheimer's disease and other disabilities.

In 2011, the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) estimated 11 percent of Alaskans 65 years and older, and nearly half of Alaskans 85 years and older, suffer from Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. With ACoA projecting Alaska's population of seniors will continue to grow, a "Silver Alert" response plan is essential for preventing the growing incidence of tragedies when a vulnerable adult with disabilities goes missing.

Senate Bill 36 would call on the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Military and Veterans affairs to develop plans for creating and publicizing a missing vulnerable adult alert through media outlets and other public alert systems. By increasing public awareness of such missing persons, the "Silver Alert" program would substantially increase the chances of finding a vulnerable adult within the crucial 24-hour period from when he or she first goes missing.

Without presenting additional costs to the state, the "Silver Alert" would greatly assist our law enforcement agencies in the crucial task of protecting our growing population of vulnerable adults. I commend this effort to have Alaska join the thirty-eight states that have implemented plans to protect senior citizens and adults with disabilities.

I join a wide range of Alaskan citizens and organizations in support of this effort to make the safety of Alaska's senior citizens and disabled adults a priority.

Sincerely,

Jean Strafford  
Executive Director

