



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693
Main: 907.465.3250
Fax: 907.465.1398

February 21, 2013

The Honorable Pete Kelly, Co-Chair
The Honorable Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Alaska Capitol, Rooms 516 & 518
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 37, Extension of the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council

Dear Senator Kelly & Senator Meyer:

The Alaska Commission on Aging encourages support for SB 37, a bill to extend the sunset date for the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council sponsored by Senator Fairclough and co-sponsored by Senators Dyson, Ellis, Gardner and French.

Suicide affects all Alaskans across the life span and cuts across economic, social and ethnic boundaries. Alaska continues to have one of the highest suicide rates in the nation with young Native men being most at risk. Suicide rates are also higher for older Alaskans (age 65+) than their U.S. senior counterparts. Suicide attempts are the third highest cause of nonfatal hospitalized injuries for Alaskans age 55 and older.

The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council was created in 2001 to advise the Legislature and the Governor on ways to improve health and wellness for Alaskans by reducing suicide, building partnerships to enhance suicide prevention efforts, developing and implementing a statewide suicide prevention plan, among other important activities. The Council has been proactive in engaging partners and making information and training available to communities and partners statewide in suicide prevention coordinating with community coalitions, tribal organizations, health care providers, communities of faith and other groups so that access to suicide prevention awareness materials and other resources can be used and shared.

The Alaska Commission on Aging respectfully asks for your support of SB 37. Suicide devastates families and communities. The Statewide Suicide Prevention Council is a valuable part of Alaska's efforts to reduce and prevent suicide. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879), should you have any questions regarding our position.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Paula Pawlowski in black ink.

Paula Pawlowski
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denise Daniello in blue ink.

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Fairclough, Vice Chair & Bill Sponsor
Senator Dunleavy
Senator Bishop

Senator Olson
Senator Hoffman