



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

Senior and Disabilities Services
Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education
Patrick J. Reinhart, Executive Director

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December 22, 2015

Senator Bill Stoltze
Alaska Capitol
Room 125
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senator Stoltze:

We are pleased to provide this letter of support to the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) for reauthorization for another eight years.

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, GCDSE works with Senior and Disabilities Services and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services.

Similarly, since 1981 the Alaska Commission on Aging has played an important role in improving the lives of Alaska's senior population. They are a major advisory group on issues that impact Alaskan seniors. The Council often partners with ACoA on projects and issues that intersect our two populations, such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers, assistive technology, accessible housing, community transportation, and long-term services and supports. ACoA also satisfies a provision of the federal Older Americans Act (OAA) that requires an advisory board to in order to receive nearly \$11 million dollars in federal funds in support of state-sponsored services that impact Alaskan seniors every day, such as in-home supports, senior center programs, adult daycare, home delivered and congregate meals, and more.

The Alaska Commission on Aging develops and monitors the Alaska State Plan on Senior Services and makes recommendations to legislation and policies that benefit older Alaskans. Like the Governor's Council, the Commission on Aging serves as an advisory group to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority on issues concerning persons with Alzheimer's disease and related-dementias (ADRD). Their recent and widely touted publication of *Alaska's Roadmap to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* is a great example of the level of commitment and professionalism that we get from both the staff and members of ACoA.

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A 2015 legislative audit of the Department of Health and Social Services concluded that the Commission serves the public interest by helping older Alaskans lead dignified, independent, and useful lives, satisfying the requirements of the Older Americans Act. The report recommends reauthorization of the Commission on Aging and the Council concurs wholeheartedly. Alaskan seniors depend on ACoA to be their voice in Juneau, as well as coordinate a multitude of services and programs statewide. We request that the Alaska Commission on Aging be reauthorized before the end of the 2016 legislative session.

Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Amy Simpson in black ink, consisting of a cursive 'A' followed by 'my' and 'Simpson' with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Amy Simpson, Chair

Handwritten signature of Patrick Reinhart in black ink, written in a cursive style.

Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director