



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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February 19, 2015

Senator Lesil McGuire
Alaska State Capitol, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 49, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Senator McGuire:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for SB 49, a bill authored by you to establish a mechanism to enhance funding for organizations that provide civil legal services to low-income individuals, veterans and older Alaskans by allowing the Legislature to appropriate up to 25% of filing fees paid annually to the Alaska Court System.

Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC), a nonprofit civil legal aid agency that has provided no-cost civil legal help to low-income Alaskans for over 45 years, is an example of an organization that would benefit from this legislation. ALSC is the sole statewide agency that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income seniors, veterans, and other eligible Alaskans.

Legal assistance for seniors is provided statewide by ALSC and assures that seniors, especially those at greatest social and economic risk, have access to the civil justice system. Last year, Alaska Legal Services provided direct legal aid to more than 850 seniors. ALSC helps seniors establish Miller Trusts, guardianships, conservatorships, advance directives and wills; prevents seniors from losing their housing due to predatory lending practices, illegal foreclosure or eviction, and renter-landlord disputes; and helps seniors obtain and maintain Social Security benefits. Alaska Legal Services employs approximately twenty attorneys statewide.

The Commission supports SB 49 and appreciates your leadership of this legislation. Access to legal information, advice, and assistance helps older Alaskans preserve their financial and personal independence, retain control of their financial and health care decisions, maintain appropriate family relationships, and protect their personal assets and well-being.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary E. Shields in black ink.

Mary E. Shields
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denise Daniello in blue ink.

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director