



March 4, 2016

Senator Bill Stoltze  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stoltze,

On behalf of the Mat-Su Health Foundation and its Board of Directors, I am writing to express support for reauthorization of the **Alaska Commission on Aging** (ACOA).

The Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF) shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center and invests its profits from that partnership back into the community in order to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in the Mat-Su.

In 2011, MSHF produced the Mat-Su Regional Plan for Delivery of Senior Services. This invaluable report has been updated in 2016 as the Mat-Su Senior Services Environmental Scan. The updated scan reconfirms the rapid population growth by seniors in the Mat-Su valley, which has been 7.3 percent per year since 2003. In fact, the Mat-Su borough has the 2<sup>nd</sup>-fastest growing senior population in the nation. As stated in the recent Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FY2016 – FY2019 published by the Alaska commission on Aging:

“The population growth rate of seniors also varies across the state. While Anchorage has the largest number of seniors, the fastest rate of increase was in the Mat-Su Borough, an increase of 117% in the 60+ population from 2000 to 2010.”

The population of Mat-Su seniors is expected to grow by 41.3 percent between 2015 and 2020 to an estimated total of 14,100 by 2020. Over this same period, the U.S. senior population is expected to grow by only 17.7 percent. Clearly, adequate planning and resources to address the needs of our aging population is of vital concern to the Mat-Su valley and the MSHF. The presence of the ACOA results in Alaska receiving over \$11 million in federal Older Americans Act funding which ends up in local areas like the Mat-Su valley, supporting older Alaskans.

The MSHF works in partnership with senior services providers to build capacity and address service needs identified in the research we’ve conducted. To this end, the work of the ACOA is vital in terms of statewide and regional planning as well as leveraging the federal funding used by the providers to help older Alaskans lead safe, dignified and meaningful lives.

As you likely know, Legislative Audit has recommended the commission be extended the maximum term – eight years – based on the positive audit results. The MSHF supports this recommendation and urges you to do the same.

If you have any questions or would like copies of the reports mentioned in this letter, please don’t hesitate to contact me directly via email: [eripley@healthymatsu.org](mailto:eripley@healthymatsu.org).

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Ripley  
Executive Director