

**Advisory Board on Alcoholism
and Drug Abuse**



Alaska Mental Health Board

ALASKA MENTAL HEALTH BOARD
ADVISORY BOARD ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
431 NORTH FRANKLIN STREET, SUITE 200
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801
(907) 465-8920

February 20, 2015

Senator Lesil McGuire
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 121
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: SB 49 – Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Senator McGuire,

On behalf of the Alaska Mental Health Board and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, I would like to express our support for SB 49. We appreciate your championing of legal services for Alaska's indigent and vulnerable citizens. For individuals experiencing mental health and substance use disorders, these non-profit public interest firms are often the only source of legal assistance. SB 49 preserves access to justice for Alaskans who do not always have a voice, and reinforces the Alaskan value of taking care of our neighbors in need.

Alaska Legal Services, the Disability Law Center, and other public interest law firms provide services imperative to the health and safety of vulnerable Alaskans. Without the high quality services offered by their lawyers, paralegals, advocates and staff, many veterans, seniors, victims of violence, and people experiencing disabilities would be left alone and without recourse when faced with unfair or unjust treatment.

The Boards support SB 49 and the additional financial support for civil legal services providers serving indigent, elderly, and disabled clients. We appreciate your advocacy on behalf of these agencies, but more importantly, on behalf of their clients and the entire justice system in Alaska.

Sincerely,

J. Kate Burkhart
Executive Director

cc: Joe Dingman, chairperson, Alaska Mental Health Board
Bob Coghill, chairperson, Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Nikole Nelson, executive director, Alaska Legal Services Corporation
David Fleurant, executive director, Disability Law Center