

March 23, 2017

Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senate Health and Social Services
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 83, Protect Vulnerable Adults/Long Term Care

Dear Senator Wilson:

On behalf of AARP Alaska's 86,000 members, we are writing to express our support for Senate Bill 83 and urge its passage through committee and ultimately enactment. This bill updates existing statute related to the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman to be aligned with new federal guidelines and regulations, and it clarifies roles and responsibilities of the agencies charged with protection of vulnerable adults, especially those who reside in institutional settings such as assisted living homes and skilled nursing facilities.

AARP Alaska supports the changes being proposed in SB 83 that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the OLTCO by: (1) Clarifying the difference in the roles of agencies (Adult Protective Services, Residential Licensing, and Health Care Facilities Licensing) within the Department of Health and Social Services and the OLTCO that respond to complaints involving vulnerable Alaskans who reside in long-term care facilities; (2) identifying the Vulnerable Adult Central Intake Office as the official repository for reports of harm; (3) removing the option for mandatory reporters to meet reporting requirements by submitting their reports to the OLTCO; (4) clarifying that the OLTCO may investigate and resolve complaints of residents in long term care facilities who are younger than age 60; and (5) allowing the OLTCO in certain circumstances to share resident information with other agencies when the resident is unable to provide consent and has no representative to provide consent. These proposed amendments will ensure that the OLTCO can focus on the needs of residents living in long-term care facilities to the satisfaction of the resident.

We view the OLTCO as one of the most consequential and efficient in our state. With a small staff, and a corps of well-trained volunteers, they are the eyes and ears of all of us who have a loved one in long term care, or who anticipate living in a facility ourselves. They do a remarkable job of resolving inevitable resident complaints and conflicts with sensitivity and fairness. They work closely with other agencies to make sure resident rights are respected and that all persons, residents and staff, are safe from harm.

AARP Alaska was very proud to work closely with the OLTCO last summer and fall in an effort to get residents of LTC facilities registered to vote, and then to provide assistance with the actual voting process when needed. It was gratifying to see the pride expressed by residents as they exercised this American right to vote, and to continue to be a part of the civic community. This is very typical of the OLTCO, that they will find any way possible to make sure older Alaskans are not forgotten nor neglected regardless of where they live.

We are pleased to support this bill, and urge its passage.

Respectfully,



Ken Helander
Advocacy Director



Marie Darlin
Volunteer Legislative Coordinator

Cc:

Sen. Von Imhof
Sen. Giessel
Sen. Micciche
Sen. Begich