



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of  
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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March 17, 2014

Senator Donald Olson  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 508  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 135, Sunset Extension for the Alaska Health Care Commission

Dear Senator Olson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for SB 135, authored by you, to continue the Alaska Health Care Commission until 2017 with responsibilities to plan and implement strategies related to health care reform for all Alaskans across the life span.

Since its inception, the Alaska Health Care Commission (AHHC) has conducted multiple efforts to increase knowledge and understanding of the challenges in Alaska's health care system and created a strategic framework to improve our health system with measurable objectives and strategies. To address the needs of older Alaskans, AHHC has examined the effectiveness in Alaska's continuum of long-term care and provided recommendations to improve planning and evidence-based strategies for palliative and end-of-life care. Given their expertise in health care planning, the ACoA believes that the AHHC could play an important advisory role to the newly formed Governor's Medicaid Reform Advisory Group by providing information to assist this task force with their reform mandates to (1) improve budget predictability and stability; (2) increase ease for providers to navigate the health care system; and (3) to implement the patient-centered medical home model to provide whole person care.

Older Alaskans represent one of the largest consumer groups of health care services of all age categories. Access to primary care is of utmost importance for many Alaskan seniors insured by Medicare who are challenged to find a primary care provider if they live in Anchorage, Fairbanks or the Mat-Su Borough. Limited access to essential health care services for older individuals can put these persons at greater health risk who may postpone going to a provider until their medical conditions become serious. Workforce shortages of primary health care providers pose a serious problem that affects all Alaskans, especially for people age 65 years and older. The ACoA looks forward to working with the Alaska Care Commission to strengthen the role of primary care providers, increase the dignity and quality of care for seriously ill patients, and provide support that emphasizes prevention and healthy lifestyles as identified in AHHC's 2013 annual report.

The Alaska Commission on Aging supports SB 135 to extend the sunset for the Alaska Health Care Commission. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or [denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov)) should you have questions and need additional information.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Mary E. Shields in blue ink.

Mary E. Shields  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denise Daniello in blue ink.

Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director