



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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March 6, 2015

Representative Bryce Edgmon
Alaska State Capitol, Room 410
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 154, Civil Legal Services Fund

Dear Representative Edgmon:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for HB 154, 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 HB 154 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,

Mary E. Shields
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Cc: Representative Max Gruenberg

Sincerely,

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director