



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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April 10, 2017

Representative David Talerico
Alaska State Capitol, Room 110
Juneau, Alaska 9980

Regarding: Support for HB 186, Food Donations

Dear Representative Talerico:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer its support for HB 186 authored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Kawasaki, Spohnholz, Tarr, Eastman, Grenn, Sullivan-Leonard, and Kopp. Although this legislation addresses the needs of all Alaskans who are food insecure and rely on food banks and other charitable organizations for donated food, this letter focuses on the benefits we perceived as important for older Alaskans from this legislation.

The population of older persons in Alaska (age 60+), estimated to be approximately 126,000 people, is increasing at an average rate of 5.5% annually and is projected to grow very rapidly in the next 15 years. The number of seniors age 85 and older will increase even more dramatically during this time frame. The risk of living in poverty increases with age, particularly for those who live alone, are widowed, and/or are of minority status. Food insecurity is growing among older adults due to financial need and the physical limitations that often accompany diminished health status which constrain an older person's ability to independently shop and prepare meals. For these reasons, many seniors rely on senior centers and food banks to help supplement their daily nutritional needs.

According to the Food Bank of Alaska (2014), more than 154,900 Alaskans are served annually by food banks of which 13% (or 20,137) are seniors age 60 years and older. In addition, Food Bank of Alaska participates in the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, that is designed to supplement the nutrition of seniors in need. Contents of the food boxes follow state-approved meal plans consisting of grains, proteins, milk, cheese, fruits, and vegetables. In FY2014, Food Bank of Alaska distributed 18,223 CSFP food boxes through its partner agencies to Alaska seniors. Moreover, senior centers use donated food provided by local food banks in their provision of meals served to seniors.

Based on our understanding, HB 186 removes the risk of liability for businesses that desire to donate their excess unsold food to charitable organizations, like food banks, to address the problem of hunger in Alaska. Food banks and other charitable organizations, such as senior centers that rely on donated food from food banks, adhere to strict food quality state regulations in the provision of food boxes and meals served to seniors and other community members. Therefore, persons who receive donated food from senior centers and food banks should be at low risk for food contamination provided that these food items are consumed in a timely manner.

We believe HB 186 is good public policy that will allow businesses to increase their charitable food donations to organizations that feed the hungry and homeless. This common sense legislation also helps to reduce the amount of usable food needlessly thrown away and decreases hunger in Alaska. Thank you for your leadership on HB 186.

Sincerely,



David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Scott Kawasaki
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Geran Tarr
Representative David Eastman
Representative Jason Grenn
Representative Colleen Sullivan-Leonard
Representative Chuck Kopp