



THE STATE
of ALASKA
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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February 19, 2013

The Honorable Fred Dyson, Chair
Senate State Affairs Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for SB 36, Missing Vulnerable Adult Prompt Response & Notification Plan

Dear Senator Dyson and State Affairs Committee Members:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support for SB 36, a bill sponsored by Senator Ellis and co-sponsored by you along with Senators Wielechowski and French. This bill will establish a vulnerable adult prompt response and notification plan that will involve the cooperation of the Department of Public Safety with the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs. Based on our understanding, the proposed vulnerable adult response program would be modeled after the successful *Amber Alert* used to find missing children and use media outlets and existing emergency notification infrastructure. Although this legislation addresses the problems of all vulnerable missing adults, the ACoA will focus on benefits we perceive for vulnerable older Alaskans from this legislation.

Wandering outside unattended and unprotected is a significant personal safety risk for persons with Alzheimer's disease. According to the Alzheimer's Association (2011), nearly 60% of people with Alzheimer's disease wander at some point during the course of their disease with approximately one-half of all wanderings resulting in personal injury if the person is not found within 24 hours. For older Alaskans wandering outside during the winter or in areas with moose or bear nearby, getting lost has life and death consequences.

As part of our efforts to learn more about the needs of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD) and their caregivers, ACoA conducted seven community forums statewide that were attended by 161 persons, many of whom are unpaid family caregivers. Improving public response services to reduce safety risks for persons with Alzheimer's disease who wander was identified as a high priority concern by the forums' participants.

The ACoA supports SB 36 that authorizes the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs to work in cooperation with the Department of Public Safety and develop a missing vulnerable adult response plan that will improve the safety of vulnerable Alaskans, such as individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. We understand that this program will not present any significant cost to the state and addresses the need for a formal notification system to help locate missing vulnerable adults, such as older Alaskans with ADRD, who often become disoriented due to their impaired condition and whose personal safety is at risk. The majority of states have established "silver alerts." An added benefit of this legislation is the creation of more awareness among law enforcement officials regarding the issues of older Alaskans.

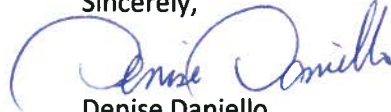
Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information about our position. Thank you for your support of SB 36 and for recognizing the critical need to improve public safety for persons with Alzheimer's disease and other vulnerable adults.

Sincerely,



Paula Pawlowski
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Cathy Giessel, Vice Chair
Senator John Coghill
Senator Bert Stedman
Senator Bill Wielechowski (Co-sponsor)
Senator Ellis, Sponsor