



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

Senior and Disabilities Services
Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special
Education
Patrick J. Reinhart, Executive Director

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February 17, 2017

RE: HB106 Letter of Support

To Representative Fansler:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the "Council") fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on bills that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

The Council would like to extend its support for HB 106. Your sponsorship of this bill is greatly appreciated as we feel that it will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities.

For low-income Alaskans with disabilities, legal services are primarily received through non-profit public interest firms. Without these vital legal services, low-income Alaskans with disabilities could be at risk of losing their home, healthcare, access to food, or even the ability to be protected from abuse. Such consequences have an obviously disastrous human impact, truly highlighting the imperative need for quality legal services to be available for all those who are in need of them. Without sufficient funding to allow full access to necessary services, individuals could be subject to unfair treatment and would certainly not be able to fully utilize the justice system.

The Council strongly supports HB 106 and the finances it would provide to enhance the provision of civil legal services to low-income Alaskans, including those who experience a disability. A clear disparity exists between the available funding for legal services for low-income individuals and the number of individuals in need of said services. In the past 30 years the number of Alaskans below the poverty level has increased, while the total appropriations for such services have decreased. HB 106 will be a positive step towards meeting the current need. Thank you for working to ensure that the Alaska justice system is fully accessible to all of the residents of this great state.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Amy Simpson".

Amy Simpson, Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Art Delaune".

Art Delaune, Legislative Chair