

**STATE OF ALASKA  
THE LEGISLATURE**

**2011**

**Source**  
CSHCR 3(HSS) am

**Legislative  
Resolve No.**  
14



Relating to promoting the safety and protection of older Alaskans.

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**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

**WHEREAS**, as valued residents of the state who enrich our communities and personal lives, older Alaskans deserve to live in a safe and dignified manner, enjoying as much independence as possible; and

**WHEREAS** the interests of the state are served by decreasing risks of older Alaskans suffering from neglect, physical or emotional abuse, abandonment, and financial exploitation, and of harming themselves; and

**WHEREAS** it is estimated that 52,263 Alaskans, or 7.5 percent of the population of the state, are 65 years of age or older; and

**WHEREAS** the number of older Alaskans is increasing, as "baby boomers" born between 1946 and 1964 reach traditional retirement age, highlighting the need for expanded protections for older Alaskans; and

**WHEREAS** older Alaskans who are isolated, particularly those with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia and other complex health needs, may be targets of abuse; and

**WHEREAS** elder abuse perpetrated by family members, friends, caregivers, and

opportunistic strangers occurs in families and communities across the state without regard to socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and ethnic distinctions; and

**WHEREAS** the devastating problem of elder abuse often goes unreported because victims fear shame and isolation will result from reporting abuse; and

**WHEREAS** an estimated 11 percent of people living in the United States who are 60 years of age or older suffer from some form of abuse; and

**WHEREAS** elder abuse in the state is increasing at an alarming rate; and

**WHEREAS** state agencies, including adult protective services in the Department of Health and Social Services, the office of the long-term care ombudsman in the Department of Revenue, and the office of elder fraud and assistance in the Department of Administration, as well as services provided by the Department of Public Safety are devoted to the protection of older Alaskans; and

**WHEREAS** the number of reports of harm filed with adult protective services has risen by 169 percent in the past four years; and

**WHEREAS** the most common allegations contained in reports of harm filed with adult protective services were related to self-neglect and financial exploitation; and

**WHEREAS** the number of reports of harm filed with the office of the long-term care ombudsman has risen by 200 percent in the past three years; and

**WHEREAS** the most common allegations contained in reports of harm filed with the office of the long-term care ombudsman were related to abuse and gross neglect in assisted living facilities; and

**WHEREAS** the protection of older Alaskans is a societal responsibility that requires families, communities, and agencies across the state to work together to help reduce and prevent abuse, neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature

(1) recognizes the need to protect vulnerable older Alaskans from any act that harms or jeopardizes an older Alaskan's health or welfare;

(2) recognizes that family and community can provide an essential source of security and well-being for vulnerable older Alaskans;

(3) supports the governor's efforts to improve safety for older Alaskans through state agencies, including adult protective services, the office of the long-term care

ombudsman, the office of elder fraud and assistance, the services of the Department of Public Safety, and the Medicaid fraud control unit in the office of the attorney general;

(4) encourages the Department of Health and Social Services and the office of the long-term care ombudsman to promote public education and awareness to increase public recognition and reporting of elder abuse;

(5) supports efforts by the Department of Health and Social Services to provide family services that enable independent living;

(6) supports efforts by the Department of Health and Social Services to improve interagency coordination of first responders and service providers through ongoing communication and planning; and

(7) supports efficient prevention and early intervention services provided by senior nutrition and outreach programs, volunteer long-term care ombudsmen, adult protective services, centers for independent living, and aging and disability resource centers, which reduce the incidence of harm to older Alaskans.