



Alaska Commission on Aging 2017 Advocacy Priorities

1. Protect the Senior Safety Net, to the greatest extent possible. This “Net” provides critical financial assistance and home- and community-based long-term support services to vulnerable older Alaskans. These core services prevent seniors from becoming Medicaid-eligible and requiring higher cost care. When these services are reduced or eliminated, older people become more at risk for declining health and impairment, which, in turn, increases the burden of care on family and other natural caregivers, and raises the possibility for expensive out-of-home placement.

2. Provide appropriate supports for family and other natural caregivers for older Alaskans because family caregiving is the foundation of long-term care in Alaska. As Alaska’s population ages, family caregiving and natural supports are becoming increasingly important in the care of Alaskans with chronic health conditions, physical disabilities, and cognitive impairments. Research indicates that family caregivers of older adults with dementia are more likely to report poor health and higher rates of chronic disease, as well as depression and anxiety, than non-caregivers. Those who receive training and supports are better equipped to provide care longer at home. The Commission supports: (1) sustained funding for the *National Family Caregiver Support Program* (provides respite, training, counseling, and other supports); and (2) adoption of a uniform family caregiver assessment tool to identify specific caregiver needs and offer person-centered caregiver support.

3. Improve capacity to serve Alaskans with Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias and move forward with the proposed 1915(i) Medicaid state plan option to serve income eligible seniors with dementia and challenging behaviors who do not qualify for waiver services. Potential services may include: (1) Assisted living rate that is tailored to reflect the special care needs of this population; (2) targeted service package using a “cash and counseling” structure where seniors and their families may choose from an array of services (meals, rides, homemaker services, devices to prevent wandering, and caregiver supports); and (3) additional federal funding for the Pioneer Homes who care for residents with early to mid-stage dementia and do not meet the level of care to qualify for the 1915 (c) waiver. The Pioneer Homes Payment Assistance Program helps to finance the cost of care for these residents with 100% General Funds. To the greatest extent possible, the ACoA supports maintaining base grant funding for *Adult Day, Senior In-Home, and Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementia Education and Supports* program to serve those who require care but do not meet Medicaid eligibility.

ACoA supports development of a long-range fiscal plan that includes a diverse array of revenue sources to pay for these services. Seniors contribute more than \$3 billion to the State’s economy. These services help seniors to remain in Alaska, contributing to the well-being of their families and communities.

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