

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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March 17, 2012

The Honorable Donald Olson, Chair
Senate Health & Social Services Finance Subcommittee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 508
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for Senior Grant Program Funds and the Alaska Complex Behavior Collaborative (Operating Budget)

Dear Chair Olson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) appreciates your consideration of the proposed increments for the Senior In-Home Services and Adult Day grant-funded program administered by the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services using amounts included in the Governor's budget. The ACoA also asks for your support of funding for the Alaska Complex Behavior Collaborative Program, to be administered through the Division of Behavioral Health, to provide crisis intervention for vulnerable Alaskans with challenging behaviors served by the Department of Health and Social Services as well as training for their caregivers. These programs are of interest to Alaska seniors and their caregivers.

- **\$250.0 for the Senior In-Home Services Grants, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, Senior Community Based Grants:** These funds are critically needed to address the growing waitlist of seniors for these funds that provide care coordination, chore and respite services for family caregivers. In December 2012, there were 123 seniors on a waitlist for services. Areas of the state with limited or no Senior In-Home services include Fairbanks, rural communities in the Interior, Dillingham (no chore or respite services), and limited services provided in Nome, Bethel, Valdez, Cordova, and the North Slope. Senior In-Home Services funds help older Alaskans (age 60 years and older) who are recovering from hospital stays, homebound individuals with physical disabilities, those with cognitive impairments such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and provides respite for family caregivers. In FY2011, the Senior In-Home program served 1,353 older Alaskans (unduplicated). These services are not free. Seniors contribute to the cost of Senior In-Home services on a sliding fee scale based on their income. This is a requirement of the grant.
- **\$225.0 for Adult Day Programs, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services, Senior Community Based Grants:** Adult Day Services provide cost-effective community care in an interactive, safe and structured environment for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD), as well as those with physical, emotional, and cognitive impairments who are not safe staying alone unsupervised. These services include personal care, mentally stimulating activities, physical exercise, nutritional support, education and respite for family caregivers. Funding is requested to serve additional seniors needing adult day and to provide them and their caregivers with more days of service. An increasing number of seniors are receiving fewer days of adult day service due to increased staff/client ratios required by serving a greater number of clients with ADRD, higher levels of acuity, and increasing presentation of challenging behaviors. In FY 2010, Adult Day Programs served 472 seniors, 56% of whom have dementia.

- **\$650.0 for the Alaska Complex Behavior Collaborative Program, Division of Behavioral Health:** Alaska's current continuum of care does not provide the appropriate array of services to care for individuals with cognitive disabilities and challenging behaviors which may cause a safety risk to these individuals and others around them, placing them at risk for being institutionalized. Such persons include those with developmental disabilities, severe mental illness, brain injury, and Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD). Older Alaskans with moderate to severe dementia in addition to mental illness and sensory impairments are particularly vulnerable to complex behavioral disorders and have significant behavioral health needs. The Pioneer Homes serve older Alaskans with ADRD however the Division states that the Homes' staff are not trained and able to care for residents who exhibit complex and out-of-control behavior. Funding was approved last year by the Legislature and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority to establish a six-month pilot program that provides intensive intervention services for these vulnerable individuals and training for their caregivers. Without continued funding, this program expires on July 1st, 2012. This increment requests annualized funding to ensure ongoing consultation and training for vulnerable persons who are at risk of being sent to in-state or out-of-state institutions.

Thank you for your consideration and support of these budget items that will help build capacity for senior programs as Alaska's senior population continues to grow. Alaska, the state with the fastest growing senior population, has experienced more than a 70% increase in the number of people age 60 years and older over the last decade, which is more than 3-1/2 times the national growth rate of 14.6%. According to 2010 Census, there are 90,876 Alaskans age 60 years and older who comprise 12.8% of the state's total population, an increase of 6.8% from 2009 (85,100). Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director, by phone (465-4879) or email (denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you have questions or require additional information.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Bettye Davis
Senator Kevin Meyer
Senator John Coghill