



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 22, 2016

Senator Cathy Giessel
Alaska State Legislature
Capitol Building, Room 427
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: SB 72 – The Alaska CARE Act

Dear Senator Giessel,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the Council) would like to extend its support for SB 72. Your sponsorship of this bill is greatly appreciated as we feel that it will positively impact Alaska's most vulnerable patients, including individuals with disabilities and complex medical needs.

More and more Alaskans are becoming primary caregivers for their relatives, often without proper training on their complex medical needs. Lay persons are increasingly expected to perform complicated nursing tasks for their family, friends, and neighbors who have been released from the hospital: from dispensing medications, to giving injections, to providing wound care. The health of medically fragile Alaskans is often placed in the hands of informal caregivers who lack training and support for the tasks they are expected to perform. These caregivers are then putting themselves and others at risk of injury, burnout, and time missed from work.

The Council strongly supports SB 72 so that caregivers are named in medical records, where the hospital is then required to notify the caregiver of the patient's discharge or transfer information. The hospital will then be required to consult with the caregiver about the discharge plan and provide instruction on the patient's aftercare needs and tasks. These unpaid caregivers are a growing segment of our population who need such support and training to reduce potential medical errors after discharge. SB 72 will be a positive step toward allowing more Alaskans to live independently at home, which is a major goal of the Council. Thank you for working to ensure that the Alaska informal caregiver system is fully accessible to all of the residents of this great state.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Amy Simpson in blue ink.

Amy Simpson, Chair
Governor's Council on Disabilities &
Special Education

Handwritten signature of Art Delaune in black ink.

Art Delaune, Chair
Legislative Committee