



Alaska Commission on Aging SFY2019 Legislative Advocacy Priorities

Protect the *Senior Safety Net* for vulnerable older Alaskans

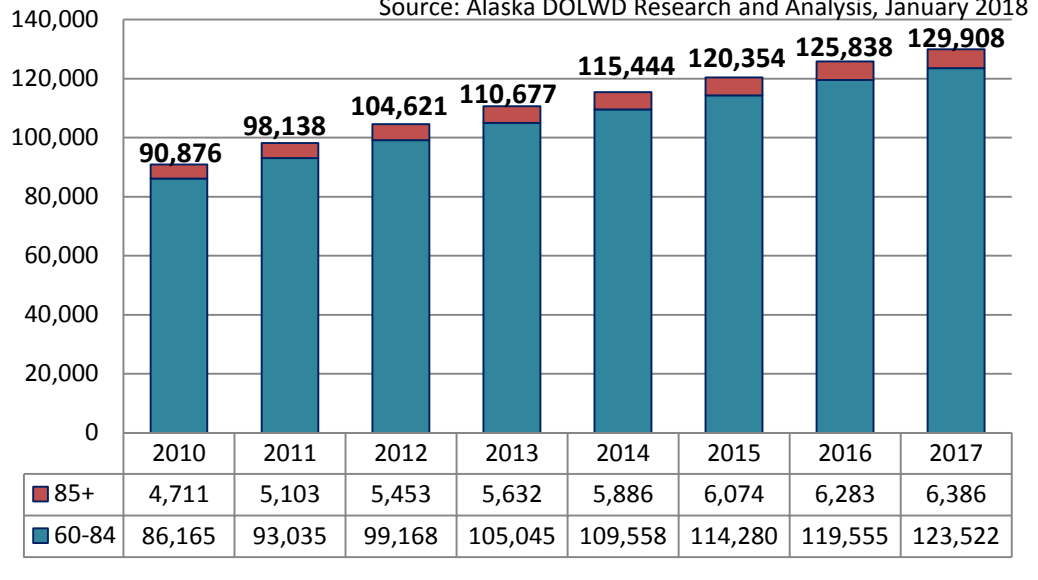
As people age, they become more at risk for chronic diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease and related dementia, as well as other disabling conditions. Older people living on fixed incomes are also at an increased risk for poverty. This "Net" provides critical financial assistance and home- and community-based long-term support services to vulnerable older Alaskans. These core services help seniors maintain their health and independence. 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.

Recommendations: Maintain programs that provide appropriate long-term support services, improve access to health care, and offer financial assistance to Alaska seniors living on small fixed incomes.

- Sustain base funding for the **Senior Community Based Grants** (Division of Senior and Disabilities Services) that provide senior meals, transportation, adult day, respite, and homemaker services as these services target the most vulnerable, many of whom are homebound, and provide support to family and other natural support caregivers.
- Preserve funding for the **1915(c) Adults Living Independently Waiver** (Division of Senior and Disabilities Services) that provides essential services to Alaskans age 21 and older who meet eligibility requirements and choose to receive services provided in their homes and in the community rather than institutional settings. Alaska's 1915(c) waivers were approved in 1993, commemorating 25 years of service to vulnerable Alaskans!
- Uphold funding for **Medicaid Optional Services** that include Personal Care Services, waiver services, Medicaid hospice, podiatry, and adult dental services. Medicare does not cover the cost for most dental services. Retired seniors on a fixed income often go without.
- Sustain funding for **Senior Benefits** (Division of Public Assistance) to help low-income seniors pay for food, housing, heat, and prescribed medications. Pass HB 236 and SB 170 to extend the Senior Benefits program which is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2018. Support the Governor's FY2019 budget which includes level funding for Senior Benefits.
- Include **enabling technology** (assistive technology, home telehealth monitoring, and medication management) in the senior service array covered by the Adults Living Independently Waiver to support seniors in their efforts to live independently at home and in the community. Many assistive technologies are low cost, offer significant savings, and provide caregiver support.
- Protect Older Alaskans from financial exploitation, abuse, and harm by maintaining appropriate base funding for **Adult Protective Services (APS)** (Senior and Disabilities Services), **Office of Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OLTCO)** (Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority), and the **Office of Elder Fraud and Abuse** (Office of Public Advocacy).
- Retain \$2 million AHFC capital funding for **Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund** as proposed in the Governor's FY19 capital budget to provide critical gap financing for the construction and renovation of affordable senior housing statewide.

Population Estimates of Alaskan Seniors, Age 60+ and 85+

Source: Alaska DOLWD Research and Analysis, January 2018



What is the estimated cost to provide home and community-based long-term support services for seniors?

Program in FY2017	Number of Seniors Served	Average annual cost/person	Total Costs
Senior Community-Based Grants (age 60+)	26,285	\$592	\$15,565,329
Personal Care Services (age 60+)	3,179 (includes 543 with dementia)	\$18,223	\$57,930,917
Alaskans Living Independently (ALI) Waiver (age 65+)	1,355	\$37,330	\$50,582,150
Senior Residential Services	29	\$20,379	\$590,991
Alaska Pioneer Homes (December 2017, age 65+)	Level 1: 65 residents Level 2: 123 residents Level 3: 249 residents		\$57,557,682
Total Costs of Care			\$186,532,388
Total if all seniors eligible for nursing home and the ALI waiver received services in the nursing home.			\$222,537,070

Source: Estimated costs based on information provided by Division of Senior & Disabilities Services, Grants Unit and Research & Analysis Unit (December 2017 & January 2018) and the Alaska Pioneer Homes (January 2018) using a format developed by SDS for the continuum of care and adapted by ACoA for senior

