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February 28, 2011

The Honorable Dennis Egan, Chair
Senate Labor and Commerce Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 510
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 87 (French)—Support

Dear Chair Egan:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee to support SB 87, authored by Senator Hollis French.

As you are well aware, Medicare beneficiaries report that they have trouble finding a primary care physician who will see them in many parts of our state. Community health centers and some urgent care clinics will see Medicare patients but few physicians in private practice will see new Medicare patients and many inform existing patients that, no matter how long they may have had a physician/patient relationship, upon their 65th birthday they will no longer see them.

SB 87 would create a mechanism for the State of Alaska to provide grants to providers who are willing to see Medicare beneficiaries. These grants would be a supplement to what Medicare is willing to pay a primary care provider.

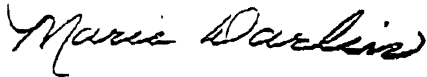
Medicare beneficiaries have paid taxes while they were working. They also pay monthly premiums and a deductible and co-pays for services. Having paid their fair share, they should be able to see a primary care provider, especially for preventive services. It is unfortunate that they cannot. SB 87 would be one more method to assure that older Alaskans as well as younger Alaskans with disabilities, who are also on Medicare, would be able to see a provider on a regular basis.

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote on SB 87.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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CC: Vice-Chair Joe Paskvan
Senator Bettye Davis
Senator Linda Menard
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Senator Hollis French