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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE HOUSE DISTRICT 33

SESSION

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HB360

SPONSOR STATEMENT

"An Act establishing the Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board; and providing for an effective date."

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in the state of Alaska¹ and are living longer lives². The state's 85+ population is expected to increase by 500% between 2022 and 2050, of which, 1/3 will experience Alzheimer's and Related Dementia³. Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development predicts home care, a part of Alaska's continuum of care services to the aging and people with disabilities, to be one of the fastest growing and most in demand occupations in the state.⁴⁵ However, the potential provider workforce demographic, those age 18 to 64, is in decline. Furthermore, low wages and lack of benefits force many caregivers out of the profession and make recruitment and retention increasingly more difficult for agencies providing in-home care services.⁶⁷

We need to create strong home care infrastructure in Alaska which will expand access to quality, affordable home and community-based care for seniors and people with disabilities, keep people in their homes and out of costly facilities, and bolster the creation of jobs. HB 360 helps accomplish this by establishing a Home Care Employment Standards Advisory Board that will investigate, advise, and develop recommendations on Medicaid rates and other policies to improve the wages, working conditions, and recruitment and retention of direct care workers.

¹ https://health.alaska.gov/acoa/documents/ACoA_SeniorSnapshot_Feb2021.pdf

² <https://alaskamentalthtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ACOA-Presentation-1.24.23-REVISED.pdf>

³ <https://alaskamentalthtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ACOA-Presentation-1.24.23-REVISED.pdf>

⁴ "Workforce Development." Alaska Mental Health Trust, Accessed February 19, 2021. <https://alaskamentalthtrust.org/alaska-mental-health-trust-authority/what-we-do/workforce-development/>

⁵ Workforce Development." Alaska Mental Health Trust, Accessed February 19, 2021. <https://alaskamentalthtrust.org/alaska-mental-health-trust-authority/what-we-do/workforce-development/>

⁶ The Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FFY 2020-2023," Alaska Commission on Aging, 2023, 170.

⁷ The Alaska State Plan for Senior Services FFY 2020-2023," Alaska Commission on Aging, 2023, 170.