

Darrell Breese

From: Mary Sullivan [msullivan@akeela.org]
Sent: Friday, January 28, 2011 2:56 PM
To: msullivan@akeela.org
Subject: HB 16

Good afternoon Representative and thank you for your service to our state on the finance committee!

My name is Mary Sullivan and I am the program manager of the seniors behavioral health coalition facilitated by Akeela Inc. I'm also a commissioner on the Anchorage Senior Citizen Advisory Commission, and an intern at AARP.

On Monday morning at 9AM you will hear a bill regarding extending the senior benefits program, and I would like to testify to the fact that many low income seniors depend upon the senior benefit program for basic living needs, such as food and utilities. The high cost of medications and health care for seniors, and especially low income seniors, puts them at greater risks for financial instability. Additionally, a risk factor for older adult behavioral health problems is loss of independence and displacement from their home. The senior benefits program allows older adults a protective factor against this risk for behavioral health problems as it allows them to remain independent longer and remain in their homes longer. Investing in this program is a cost saver in the long run as an older adult with a behavioral health problem costs the state a lot of money in terms of medical costs and utilization and other costs throughout the continuum of care. Alaska has the fastest growing rate of older adults in the nation, and investing in a program that will help our aging population is always going to be a good idea. Again, investing in the senior benefits program allows many seniors stay independent longer, aging in place and retaining their dignity and productivity as a senior citizen in our community.

Thank you for your work on this matter and for your service to our state.

Cheers,

Mary C. Sullivan

Program Manager

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January 28, 2011

The Honorable Bill Stoltze, Co-Chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 515
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Bill Thomas, Co-Chair
House Finance Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 505
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 16 (Hawker)—Support

Dear Co-Chairs Stoltze and Thomas:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we are pleased to indicate our very strong support for HB 16, authored by Representative Mike Hawker which will extend the Senior Benefits program for another four years. HB 16 is co-sponsored by your Committee colleague Representative Gara as well as Representatives Millet, Lynn, Tuck, Peterson, Herron, Kawasaki, and Johnson.

There is no doubt that the Senior Benefits program has proven to be an invaluable help to many older Alaskans who might not be able to afford to stay here without it.

We all recognize that Alaska's seniors face high health care costs as well as high energy costs.

The Senior Benefits program has allowed over 10,000 older Alaskans to deal with these costs and to remain citizens of our state.

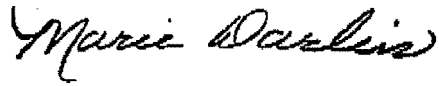
We want Alaskans to be able to stay here after retirement. The Senior Benefits program is essential to achieve that goal.

AARP recommends an "AYE" vote for HB 16.

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,



Marie Darlin, Coordinator
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CC: Vice-Chair Fairclough
Representative Costello
Representative Edgmon
Representative Joule
Representative Neuman
Representative T. Wilson
Representative Doogan
Representative Gara
Representative Guttenberg
Representative Hawker