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Barrow, AK 99723
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Dillingham/Bristol Bay Region
P.O. Box 715
Dillingham, AK 99576-0715
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Juneau, AK 99801
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Ketchikan/Southeast Region
2415 Hemlock, Ste. 5
Ketchikan, AK 99901
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P.O. Box 1933
Seward, AK 99664
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Stephen P. Lesko
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Deputy Executive Director

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To the Members of the Twenty-Eighth Alaska Legislature:

Hope Community Resources strongly supports passage of HB 134 sponsored by Representative Mia Costello. **Hope believes both the mediset and unit dose provisions of HB 134 will help reduce Medicaid costs and increase the safety of medication usage.**

Hope is the largest statewide provider of community supports for Alaskan children, adolescents and adults who experience disabilities. Hope was the first agency to enter into a defined partnership with the State of Alaska to initiate the specialized program that we now call "children with complex medical conditions." This pioneer pilot at the time, proved to be overwhelmingly successful in two distinct ways- it significantly reduced costs and clearly improved not only quality of life, but also life expectancy. We are no strangers to medication administration and acceptable protocol in a variety of challenging situations.

The unit dose and mediset systems are vital components of both community and Long Term Care service delivery. Hope has utilized both for many who choose our supports in our nine regional offices. With a defined history of extensive experience in medication and medication administration, we have come to firmly believe that both the unit dose and mediset systems significantly decrease medication errors.

In a number of our residential homes, as many as three individuals can be involved in intensive medication regimens. **Without unit dose and medisets, we would be coping with serious scenarios that could easily compromise the reasonable health and safety of some of our most vulnerable citizens.** For the record, the following points for consideration are offered by Hope in support of HB 134:

- Medisets lessen non-adherence or mistakes that pose a serious safety risk.
- There is less forgetfulness, confusion for people and caregivers, thus preventing readmissions to hospitals or mistakes when they return home from the hospital.
- Many of our individuals take seizure medications 4X daily, needing to schedule calcium 2 hours in between to prevent the supplement from blocking action of these life-saving drugs. Sometimes they take 4 different seizure meds 4 X daily!
- Many of our individuals are on medications not just for seizure disorders, but for pulmonary hypertension, high blood pressure, inflammatory conditions, mental health disorders, acid reflux, & endocrine disorders or imbalances. Cancer, chronic renal failures are not unknown to us or those we support. In essence, medication routines are far from routine- they can be extremely complex!

Furthermore; legally, licensed nurses or staff are not allowed to "dispense meds" from bottles into specific slots of portable storage sets. That activity is considered dispensing & only a Pharmacist may dispense.

Helping people who experience disabilities achieve their dreams through community supports since 1968.

- Medications need to be given at the right time, in the right dose, to the right person, with the correct number of pills or capsules each time, in the right route and with the right documentation.
- There is great savings when medisets are issued weekly and so 30 days of meds are not destroyed when changed or discontinued.
- When the same medication is being given the same day in different doses at different or the same time, it can be confusing. (Giving two of the 200 mg instead of two of the 50 mg is a mistake that could happen and be deadly.)
- Managing meds well has been a key for so many of our individuals that allows them to reside in community homes instead of placement within the confines of extremely expensive institutions.
- There would be no cost savings realized if medisets are cut, due to the immense health & safety issues that would result from errors or non-compliance.
- The State of Alaska has been instrumental in supporting community inclusion for our families experiencing a physical or intellectual disability, or chronic debilitating conditions. In the past, we have been fortunate in having such support that works and is fiscally responsible. Why change an excellent system in favor of another that will surely jeopardize the welfare of so many who experience disabilities?

Past testimony from the Alaska Board of Nursing, along with numerous providers of support to individuals classified as “vulnerable”, clearly mirrors and enhances our contention that **we must advance and pass HB 134, and we must do so this legislative session.**

Passage of HB 134 will provide our vulnerable citizens continued access to community; it will allow them to live as independently as possible in so many regions throughout Alaska of their choosing, birth, and culture; it will provide a reasonable measure of safety and enhance the overall welfare of our vulnerable Alaskan citizens; and the unit dose and mediset systems will prove to be fiscally responsible and cost effective.

HB 134 values each human life in so many ways and emphasizes the priceless ability to live in community, as independently as possible, with minimal supports, dignity, value and a defined sense of real contribution.

If you have further questions or concerns, I standby with my excellent, professional Health Team to address any issues that may arise and urge the passage of this most excellent legislation, HB 134.

Respectfully,



Stephen P. Lesko: CEO
Executive Director
Hope Community Resources, Inc.