

Senate Finance Committee Hearing
FY17 Operating Budget
March 7, 2016

- My name is Marianne Mills and I represent senior service providers around the state; I am the President of AgeNet, Alaska's association of member agencies and advocates for vulnerable older Alaskans and their family caregivers.
- The members of AgeNet appreciate the difficult budget situation which you face and we recognize that a combination of cuts and increased revenues are needed to address Alaska's Fiscal Crisis.
- On the revenue side, we support the use of Permanent Fund earnings.
- On the expense side, we need to help older Alaskans remain in their own homes for as long as possible through the senior grant program. It only costs \$600 per senior per year to fund the senior grants. A hot meal at the local senior center combats malnutrition and isolation which leads to illness, injury, and expensive hospital care.
- Home delivered meals for homebound senior citizens ensure good nutrition and a daily safety check to those whose only human contact that day is often the meal delivery driver. Research shows that states which invest more in home-delivered meal programs see greater reductions in nursing home placements. A nursing home placement for one older Alaskan costs a quarter million dollars per year.
- If a senior is fortunate to have family to depend on, we want to make it possible for the family caregiver to continue to care for them. Caring for an older person with dementia or physical disabilities can be physically and emotionally demanding and caregivers often neglect their own help.
- The caregiver support grant program offers training on caregiving skills, such as proper lifting, services such as respite care to give the caregiver a much-needed break, and items which relieve the stress of the caregiver, such as minor home modifications. Adult Day services provide a safe, structured setting for the elder so that family members can go to work with piece of mind.

Senior grants have proven to help older Alaskans remain with dignity in their own homes and communities. They also support families to care for their own and save the state money by preventing elders from going into costly institutions.

Thank you for your support.

For further information, please call Marianne Mills at (907) 723-0226.