

From: [Sen. Anna MacKinnon](#)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: FW: Budget Testimony Ketchikan
Date: Tuesday, March 08, 2016 2:22:19 PM

Kristen Pratt

Legislative Aide
Office of Senator Anna MacKinnon
Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol | Room 516
(907) 694-8944

From: Rita Menzies [mailto:rmenzies95@hotmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, March 06, 2016 11:35 PM
To: Sen. Anna MacKinnon <Sen.Anna.MacKinnon@akleg.gov>
Subject: Budget Testimony Ketchikan

March 6, 2016

Dear Senator MacKinnon:

I write to you today as the parent of a young adult with disabilities (seizure disorder, autism, nonverbal with significant global delays in gross motor and fine motor skills) with concern of the impending budget cuts for such a vulnerable population within Alaska – those with developmental disabilities, mental health issues, as well as the seniors.

I have lived and worked as a nurse within the Ketchikan community for the last 24 years not to mention a number of my personal friends and acquaintances have family members with disabilities or are aging. I have had interactions with many residents who have in the past or are currently receiving the services listed to be cut. The programs I refer to are as follows:

- The proposed reduction for the Adult Medicaid Dental program is 50%. This provides limited dental care for low income seniors and those individuals with disabilities. Dental care is essential for maintaining good health. This population of vulnerable Alaskans needs to be able to access dental care for prevention as well as dental infections. Lack of coverage over time results in costly Emergency Department visits not to mention the effects of dental pain and decaying teeth on overall health, putting people at risk for developing dental infections associated with periodontal disease, diabetes, pneumonia, and chronic vascular diseases. Please maintain the Adult Medicaid Dental Program.*
- The Community Developmental Disability (DD) Grants are essential for those with disabilities. Services can include supported employment, respite care, day habilitation, case management, and specialized equipment. These grants are used to serve those individuals on the DD Registry waiting for Medicaid home and community based services. My son was on the “waitlist” for 8 years. He was able to use a grant for a year or two prior to receiving the waiver which was such a help at the time as he requires 1on 1 assistance at all times for his personal safety. In FY15, there were 4, 057 individuals who received services at an average cost of \$3,556. A 5% cut to the program means approximately 203 individuals will not*

receive services. The research shows that the longer individuals wait for services, the more intense the needs become. Thank you for considering a smaller reduction to the Senior Community Based Grants. Please support the Governor's budget for Community DD Grants to help people with disabilities living stable, safe and productive lives in the community.

- The Personal Care Assistance Program is for those with disabilities and seniors who need help with activities of daily living such as eating, bathing, dressing, shopping, and light house work. Many get minimal hours but those hours are essential for them to maintain the independence of staying in their own home and community. The Federal Law required PCA services must be provided for individuals whose needs meet a nursing home level of care, thus, if they are unable to have the PCA, those individuals may need to move into a facility which will cost much more (not to mention lack of facilities available within the state).

Please support funding for the Personal Care Assistance in order for vulnerable Alaskans to remain in their homes and communities.

- The proposed Senior Benefits Program reduction will affect 5,348 seniors who make \$25,000 annually or less. This is 175% of the federal poverty level. The Benefits program assists senior to pay their heating bill, food, and other living expenses. Please support funding for Senior Benefits for people with low to moderate income.

- Senior Community Based Grants provide services for disabled and elderly Alaskans with Alzheimer's disease and dementia. This program may provide nutritional transportation support, Adult Day support, family caregiver supports and many more supports for this population of vulnerable Alaskans. Caregivers depend on grant funded services for respite and support. An average annual per senior grant is approximately \$600 compared to \$20,100 for PCA, \$31,300 for the waiver, and \$270,845 for nursing home care. There are approximately 25,893 persons served through this service. Thank you for considering a smaller reduction to this grant. Please support the Governor's budget for these critical supports so seniors can stay in their homes and out of the higher cost assisted living and health care.

- The Pioneer Homes is proposed for a \$741,000 cut which would mean 11 positions as well as a reduction in supplies and cable TV to be removed. The Pioneer Home serves those individuals that most need the services and to decrease their staffing may cause a decrease in those clients served. Please support funding the Pioneer Homes.

- The General Relief Assistance (GRA) is a service for those in an emergent need with no other resources and not eligible for other programs. This program is significant for over 550 individuals. Please consider a smaller reduction.

- Please reconsider the staffing cuts recommended for the State Troopers. We need to keep Alaska safe! Alaska State Troopers are critical to the health and safety of all Alaskans, especially adults and children due to disability and/or age.

As a conscientious citizen, I recognize the fiscal situation the state faces given the dramatic drop in oil prices and really appreciate the work the Senate Finance Subcommittee has done trying to control the costs of state government. The decisions made during this budget time must be difficult. I would like to THANK YOU for keeping the Governor's recommendation related to the Behavioral Health Grants, for providing flexibility to the Division of Juvenile Justice to determine facility closures rather than closing the Nome Youth Facility.

Those seniors and those with disabilities need the services listed above to be able to live in the least restrictive environment – their home in their community – a right all Alaskans want to maintain.

Thank you for your consideration and your time.

Sincerely,
Rita Menzies
419 Knudson Cove Road
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901
Rmenzies95@hotmail.com

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile. – Albert Einstein