



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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April 7, 2015

Senator Kathy Giessel
Alaska State Capitol, Room 427
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

Regarding: Support SB 72, Designated Caregivers for Patients

Dear Senator Giessel:

The Alaska Commission on Aging is pleased to express our support for SB 72, Designated Caregivers for Patients, to improve health outcomes for patients discharged by the hospital, enhance caregiver competence in providing aftercare tasks, and reduce costly hospital readmissions. This legislation includes three important components: (1) Allows patients to voluntarily designate a caregiver, who may be a family member or friend, to provide post-discharge care, pending their abilities and willingness to perform such tasks and documents the caregiver's name and contact information in the patient's record; (2) Notifies the caregiver of the patient's discharge home to provide time for the caregiver to make necessary preparations; and (3) Consults with the designated caregiver describing the patient's aftercare needs and offers training in the tasks to be performed. When family and other informal caregivers receive appropriate supports and training, research shows they are more confident in their abilities to provide quality care, enjoy a higher quality of life, and can provide care much longer – thus preventing the need for unnecessary hospital readmissions and institutional care.

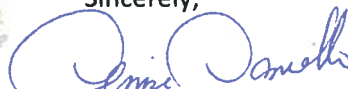
Discharge from the hospital is a critical point in a patient's recovery, particularly for older people with chronic health conditions. When patients leave the hospital, especially older ones, they may have new medications to take, new symptoms to monitor, and follow-up doctor appointments - which all require focused attention at a time when the person is most vulnerable. Family and other trusted informal caregivers are essential to an older person's recovery and are responsible for most of the aftercare that happens at home. However, without proper training in performing complicated medical tasks such as administering complex medications, providing wound care, giving injections, mobility and transferring an individual out of a wheelchair, preparing food for special diets, and operating medical equipment, untrained caregivers can jeopardize the patient's recovery or increase their own risk for personal injury.

Unpaid family caregiving is the essential bedrock for long-term care and a rapidly growing component of Alaska's health care system. The Commission supports SB 72 and appreciates your leadership, Senator Giessel, on this important legislation to enable older Alaskans to stay in their own home longer by providing much needed training and support to families caring for their loved ones at home who are recovering from hospital stays.

Sincerely,


Mary E. Shields
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,


Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director