



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693
Main: 907.465.3250
Fax: 907.465.1398

February 2, 2018

Representative Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Regarding: Support for HB 236, Extending the Alaska Senior Benefits Program

Dear Representative Kawasaki:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer its support for HB 236 authored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Spohnholz, Fansler, Tuck, Ortiz, Sullivan-Leonard, and LeDoux. Since 2007, the Alaska Senior Benefits Program has provided an invaluable resource for modest-income older Alaskans who live on small fixed incomes to afford basic life necessities. In the last statewide senior survey conducted by ACoA in 2015, senior participants identified financial security as the #2 most pressing issue confronting seniors behind access to health care services.

The risk of living in poverty increases in later life and varies by race, gender, marital status and age. The risk of poverty is far greater for seniors who are 75 years and older, as well as for persons living alone, widowed women, and those of minority status. According to the Division of Public Assistance (2017), the average age of recipients is 75 and the maximum age is 104. Typically, seniors who receive Senior Benefits are older and often have little or no cushion to meet emergency needs, let alone to afford basic life necessities.

The Senior Benefits Program provides tiered monthly payments to older Alaskans, up to 175% of the federal poverty level for Alaska. While the monthly payments are not large amounts, they make a difference in whether or not an older person is able to live comfortably and afford food, rent, heating fuel, medication, and other necessities. This cash benefit helps low-income seniors to live with dignity and independence in their home communities which has a positive impact on senior health and well-being.

Without legislative action this session, the Senior Benefits Program will end on June 30, 2018. The Commission on Aging strongly recommends passage of legislation to extend the sunset date for the Senior Benefits Program. We thank you for your leadership, Representative Kawasaki, of HB 236 that will allow the program to continue and protect seniors most vulnerable to economic stresses. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David A. Blacketer".

David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denise Daniello".

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Spohnholz
Representative Fansler

Representative Tuck
Representative LeDoux

Representative Ortiz
Representative Sullivan-Leonard



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facebook.com/AARPAK

February 9, 2018

Rep. Scott Kawasaki
State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: HB 236 - Extend Senior Benefits Payment Program

Dear Representative Kawasaki,

On behalf of the over 85,000 members of AARP Alaska, we offer support without reservation for HB 236, which extends the very important Senior Benefits Program until 2024. Without passage of HB 236, the Senior Benefits Program will end in June, 2018.

The Senior Benefits Program is, I believe, one of the most important in helping older Alaskans remain independent. In the 1980's, I spent about 15 years working for the Senior Services at Anchorage Community Mental Health Center. In that job, I made hundreds of home visits to older people struggling to make it from day to day.....for many different reasons. I saw examples of resiliency and determination that were evident in the tenacity with which people coped with very difficult situations, including physical and mental disability. More often than not, the people I visited were also living on very limited means, and in those days they were extremely grateful for the monthly Alaska Longevity Bonus. That program is long gone, and was ultimately replaced by the Senior Benefits Program, which is means tested based on the Federal Poverty Levels. The programs change, eligibility changes, but the people and their situations are still so much the same.

During Legislature's interim, last September, a listening session was held by the House Health and Social Services Committee to provide opportunity for public comment on the importance of the program for older Alaskans. For three hours, more than 50 people called from all over the state to relate their stories and talk about what the Senior Benefit program means to them. We heard about people having to make difficult choices among paying for food, heat, or medication. Several talked about the benefit providing the ability to hang on to their car....the last vestige of independence for so many. But what really impressed was that over and over the story was told of how that car enabled the owner to take their friends and neighbors to doctor appointments or to the grocery store. It became clear that while the Senior Benefit might be paid to an individual, often that individual invested it in the lives of others so they could collectively maintain dignity and independence.

We at AARP often get calls from seniors in Alaska with questions or needing help with an issue. When it was announced a few years ago that some Senior Benefit payments were going to be reduced, I got a frantic call from an older man in Anchorage. He told me of his worry if his benefit went away....but not only for himself, but also those living around him. It so happens that there was an enclave of old campers and trailers parked behind a small strip mall. Many had no heat, most had no plumbing, several had leaks and holes to the outside. The man I spoke with, a veteran by the way, still had a car and would take his neighbors to food bank distribution sites several times a week so they could eat. When they had medical or other bills and couldn't pay the rent to park behind the strip mall, they would

move their camper to another location for a month until they could get back to their spot behind the strip mall.

Just like when I made home visits, I heard in the story of this man and his neighbors what it takes to remain independent....even when old, disabled, or infirm....and how determined these older Alaskans are to do that. The Senior Benefits program serves more than 11,000 such older people across the state, for a relative drop in the bucket of the state's budget. It is crucial to them, and their example is crucial to all of us.

We are grateful to you, Rep. Kawasaki, for your sponsorship of HB 236, and the respect for Alaska's seniors that you demonstrate. We offer our best wishes for extension of this important program. Please contact me if you have any questions about AARP's support.

Respectfully,



Ken Helander
Advocacy Director
762-3314
khelander@aarp.org

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Teresa Storch [mailto:████████████████████@akleg.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 3:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Dear Legislators,

I am asking that Senior Benefits be extended to 2022' or indefinitely (preferably the latter). I went from being homeless to home ownership , thanks to law suit settlements that are now gone, but I will be homeless again without these benefits. At 66 years of age, retired from almost 20 years of commercial fishing due to disabilities, this is a terrifying prospect for me! My situation is complicated and details regarding my previous statement take too much time. I speak for many Kodiak senior women (I'm one of them) and men in saying that these benefits are vitally important to survive. There's been a monsoon here most of the summer and many gardens failed, although supplementing the food supplies for us was critical. The berry crop failed, too, even though some of us relied heavily on it to keep our food bills lowered; food is very costly on the island! I and others have to be on a special diet, which further complicates our situations: food banks often can't accommodate us

. The monsoon also prevented absolutely necessary roof repair and other similar projects from happening (or when it did, it was unsatisfactory), so seniors in particular are really hurting financially. The shortage of affordable housing here has reached a crisis stage, so there are few options for many low income Kodiak seniors, yet the homeless population here has swollen exponentially in the last several years.

Please leave these benefits as they are. Thank you

Sincerely,

Teresa Storch.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Gina Creedon [mailto:Gina.Creedon@akleg.gov]
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2017 6:12 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Hi,

I am a disabled long term resident of Alaska. At present I receive \$8700/yr in SSI, and \$4344/yr in APA, for a total income of \$13,044 per year. I receive the Alaska Permanent Fund, but that is deducted from SSI over the course of the year at about \$85/mo. This is not an uncommon thing, because many people who came to Alaska interrupted their solid quarters of earnings, and so are not eligible for disability, or retirement, based on the income, but instead get the minimum, the same as I do, and will.

My debt payments and utilities leave me \$240/mo to spend on food, transportation, medical co-pays, soap, toilet paper, postage, and pet food... It is not very much.

APA will end when I am 62, and must convert SSI to regular retirement, and I will get \$597/mo, or \$7,164/yr, and no APA... My total income will drop below my debt payments on my home. I cannot declare bankruptcy because I don't owe enough, and IF I were to owe enough, I would lose my house, because I own too much of it. I cannot refinance my debt because I don't MAKE enough.

I will qualify for food stamps of \$126/mo, or \$4 per day for food. I will have no money at all for transportation, medical co-pays, prescription co-pays for drugs that I need to stay alive, I will have no toilet paper, no soap, no postage stamps, no phone - even the subsidized phone requires taxes to be paid on it to avoid cancellation. I will not be able to pay for heat or electricity. I will no longer be able to support my cat. I am terrified of the 3 years between my mandatory retirement and eligibility for the Senior Benefit, but I *might* make it....

If the Senior Benefit disappears, I will literally just die.

Thank you,

Gina Creedon

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Eric Thomas [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 9:42 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

I would like to make it known that this voter would like to see the program continue. In my work role I meet elderly community members who are already homeless or moments away from becoming homeless. The payments this program can offer do make a difference in the lives of the recipients and could contribute to keeping another one of our elders housed and out of the shelter system. Please do not allow this program to die.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Eric Thomas

Assessment Specialist, Homeless Family Services

Catholic Social Services

3710 East 20th Ave

Anchorage AK 99508

Phone: (907) 222-7300

Direct: (907) 222-7349

FAX: (907) 258-1091

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Bert Hansen [mailto:berthansen@akleg.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 3:36 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

My name is Bert Hansen I am 59 1/2 yo. I live at Chugach View a Senior and Handicapped Housing. I know first hand that the Senior Benefits Program helps many of the residents here and other places. It needs to continue without it many of the seniors would not be able to survive.

Besides the fact I am just about old enough to qualify!

So it is with great hopes that this program will continue not so much for me but for those that need it now!!

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Patricia Partin [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 2:43 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello;

I am a lifelong Alaskan who is disabled, also lifelong, and retired in November 2014 after 49 years of employment. I am a member of AARP and I vote. I receive very little Social Security due to the system calibrations despite those 49 years of employment and depend on Medicare, Medicaid and Senior Benefits to live.

To cut back or destroy the Senior Benefits program is shortsighted, not well thought out and foolishly ignorant of cause and effect. If you take away monies that someone is depending on, you will cause that person to make cuts that will eventually need more and more public funding.

There seems to be a cut now and worry about consequences later these days or hope no one notices the consequences ability to cause even bigger problems not long down the road.

Instead of cutting needed programs such as Medical and education, perhaps look to issues and programs that are geared to political advantage? When you harm the seniors and the young, what is left?

--
Patricia

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council

From: Tanya Rose Gregory [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 9:36 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Cc: Bonnie Carroll-Ginnis <[REDACTED]>; Settle, Julie (HSS sponsored)
<[REDACTED]>
Subject: Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council

Morning,

I would like to be informed upcoming events/meeting for the Senior Benefits Program.

I work with and have elder clients here in Nikolai, Alaska. I am also, part-time Tribal Worker Department Specialist and State Of Alaska Fee Agent serving Nikolai, Alaska since 2013 to present.

I am very concerned for our Elders here in Nikolai, Alaska especially that they depend on the Senior Benefit Program and what could I do for this Region?

If there are any upcoming meeting/teleconferences about this program or other programs being changed, could I be also informed?

Kind Regards,

Tanya R. Gregory
Tribal Worker Dept. Specialist/Fee Agent
Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council
Ph. 907-293-2311

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: HB 236 call in

From: Lucia Ivanoff [mailto:██████████@██████████]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 236 call in

My name is Lucia Ivanoff. I am the daughter of an Alaska Longevity Bonus Program recipient which throughout the years have had different titles and is presently the Senior Benefits Program. I am writing in support of this program for the Senior Citizens of Alaska.

My parents were hard workers season to season. My earliest memories include those of my parents both working in canneries in Kwiguk before summer camp and then again in St. Mary's from the time we moved there. As we came of age, my brothers and I worked as well in the cannery, Yukon Packers, in the village of St. Mary's until its closure. In the winter Mom made fur parkies and sold them for extra income throughout the season.

I remember going to store with her or rummaging through her shopping bags if I hadn't followed her there! There was always canned fruit, canned vegetables, tissue paper, tea, coffee, Crisco and many others. We were a family of many girls and boys and still for each evening we shared one can of vegetables and one can of fruit at our evening meal, these vegetables and fruit not being of any of the kind we picked and preserved throughout the season in the spring or summer.

I remember there were times I heard Mom exclaim that the program was no more, that it was over and she and other mothers would hope something else would be supplied, always, in hopes for the needs of their children.

I respectfully ask for the renewal of this HB 236 measure for our respected Elders of our Alaskan communities and thank you for the years it has been provided for them. Thank You!

Sincerely,

Lucia Ivanoff

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Housr Bill 236

From: James Heckeler [mailto:James.Heckeler@akleg.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 2:14 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Housr Bill 236

To whom it may concern,

Please say yes to House Bill 236

Thank you
James R Heckeler

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House Bill 236

From: Audrey Jones [mailto:audrey.jones@alaska.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:15 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 236

After over 65 years in Alaska my husband and I moved to Tok. We have made many friends at the Senior center. Most of these folks really need the Senior Services to stay in their homes and maintain a healthy balanced diet. They also benefit from the social aspect and exchange of ideas and knowledge. They are an inspiration to us all. We hope you will extend the Senior Benefit Program (HB236) to 2022.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: upcoming bill to extend benefits

From: Teresa Storch [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 3:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Dear Legislators,

I am asking that Senior Benefits be extended to 2022' or indefinitely (preferably the latter). I went from being homeless to home ownership , thanks to law suit settlements that are now gone, but I will be homeless again without these benefits. At 66 years of age, retired from almost 20 years of commercial fishing due to disabilities, this is a terrifying prospect for me! My situation is complicated and details regarding my previous statement take too much time. I speak for many Kodiak senior women (I'm one of them) and men in saying that these benefits are vitally important to survive. There's been a monsoon here most of the summer and many gardens failed, although supplementing the food supplies for us was critical. The berry crop failed, too, even though some of us relied heavily on it to keep our food bills lowered; food is very costly on the island! I and others have to be on a special diet, which further complicates our situations: food banks often can't accommodate us

. The monsoon also prevented absolutely necessary roof repair and other similar projects from happening (or when it did, it was unsatisfactory), so seniors in particular are really hurting financially. The shortage of affordable housing here has reached a crisis stage, so there are few options for many low income Kodiak seniors, yet the homeless population here has swollen exponentially in the last several years.

Please leave these benefits as they are. Thank you

Sincerely,

Teresa Storch.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

-----Original Message-----

From: Laurie [mailto:]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 12:54 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

I just heard today through my local senior center that there is a plan to eliminate this benefit. I follow the news and other media and I am surprised that this is being suppressed in local news. It is unbelievable that you would take the PFD and now take another benefit from seniors. As many seniors, we live month to month on social security, barely able to pay the high cost of living in Alaska. I want to know exactly which legislators are supporting this. I will make a point of making sure it is all over social media and add those people to my now long growing list of who I will vote against their political position. Seniors are not the problem in Alaska, they are the responsible citizens. Why don't you focus on the crime and young freeloaders that has over run the state and do something that helps and protects us, instead of adding to the harm and difficulty to the aged that has no way to alter their situation.

L Olson
Kasilof Ak

Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House bill 236

-----Original Message-----

From: Joan Tower [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 5:25 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House bill 236

Sent from my iPhone I am 76 and receive senior benefits. In regards to Senior Benefits, I would like to know if they are considered to be income if one is eligible for adult public assistance. If so and senior benefits were eliminated, would public assistance benefits be increased by the same amount? if that is the case they should be eliminated as it would save money in the end by eliminating administrative costs to the senior benefits program. Sincerely Joan Tower

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

From: Patricia Partin [mailto:████████████████████]]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 2:43 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello;

I am a lifelong Alaskan who is disabled, also lifelong, and retired in November 2014 after 49 years of employment. I am a member of AARP and I vote. I receive very little Social Security due to the system calibrations despite those 49 years of employment and depend on Medicare, Medicaid and Senior Benefits to live.

To cut back or destroy the Senior Benefits program is shortsighted, not well thought out and foolishly ignorant of cause and effect. If you take away monies that someone is depending on, you will cause that person to make cuts that will eventually need more and more public funding.

There seems to be a cut now and worry about consequences later these days or hope no one notices the consequences ability to cause even bigger problems not long down the road.

Instead of cutting needed programs such as Medical and education, perhaps look to issues and programs that are geared to political advantage? When you harm the seniors and the young, what is left?

--

Patricia

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Support for Sr Benefit to extend past June 2018

From: Andrews, Caitlin [mailto:caitlin.andrews@peacehealth.org]
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2017 4:49 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for Sr Benefit to extend past June 2018

To whom it may concern,

The Senior Benefit program is crucial for Alaska elders due to continuously rising costs of groceries, living expenses, prescription medications, and healthcare. Here at PeaceHealth Medical Group Primary Care, we see many elderly patients who have extensive, complicated health conditions and the small Senior monthly Benefit provides them chances to buy healthy food options in addition to paying their living expenses to remain as independent as possible.

This fund is crucial to overall health of our elders!

Sincerely,

Caitlin Andrews, LCSW | Social Worker | PHMG Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Women's Health, & Behavioral Health

[PeaceHealth](#) | 3100 Tongass Avenue | Ketchikan, AK 99901

office 907.228.8106

fax 907.228.8508

front desk 907.228.8140

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Comments on Senior Benefits Program

From: Tatyana Rogach [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 12:47 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Comments on Senior Benefits Program

Senior Benefits and PDF are holding people in Alaska.

Prices are going up with a dramatic speed and there is no indexation for seniors.

I have to buy a lot of over - the counter supplements, vitamins, ointments for diabetes and arthritis, my memory issues, eye and ear medicine, as well as other medications. I spend on them about \$200 per month.

I mostly have to thrive on vegetables and fruit because of my high cholesterol.

I get a box with canned food from Salvation Army but it does not include fresh vegetables and fruit.

I do not know what my life could be like without Senior Benefits.

I thank Alaska Government for their thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,

Tatyana Rogach.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits Program

-----Original Message-----

From: Katherine Hayes [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 8:00 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits Program

To All Alaskan State Legislators

My name is Katherine Hayes. I am a 73 year old Alaskan of 31+ years. I have voted in every election.

After working all my life, I now find myself in poverty.
I never thought after working for more then 53 years I would be in this situation.

Divorce and Major Medical expenses destroyed my retirement savings completely.

Please do not remove the Senior Benefit Program.

I live on my Social Security and without this wonderful program I do not know what I would do. Rents, utilities, food, gas, & insurance is so expensive.

Please help Alaskan Seniors that have worked hard to build this State. Renew the Alaskan Senior Benefit Program.

Katherine Hayes
████████████████████
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

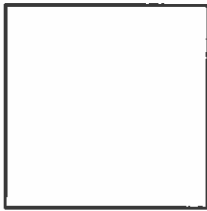
Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

From: Audrey Sunnyboy [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:21 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello,
Please do not cut any of the benefits for Alaska's seniors-it is already far to difficult to try to live with what we have now-cutting any of the benefits would make life a lot more harder for many of us.
Yes, it's a plus that so many of us like to eat crackers because that's what we can afford now-we won't even have that if you start to cut benefits for us.
If you were like us, without your legislative retirement, you would appreciate our asking for this bit of grace when you retire.
Thank you,
Audrey Sunnyboy



age 71 (yes I have been able to live this long! [REDACTED])

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House Bill 236

From: Audrey Jones [mailto:audrey.jones@akleg.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:21 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 236

We hope you will extend the Senior Benefit Program to 2022.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

-----Original Message-----

From: January Grizzell [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 12:54 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

Please do not lower or discontinue the Senior Benefits Program.

Everything is going up except a seniors income. Groceries, utilities, transportation, housing, doctor and dental care, prescriptions, insurance, fuel, Medicare, postage and all general living expenses steadily rise.

There are all sorts of programs to provide safe housing for people who are homeless due to a life style of alcohol and drug abuse.

Often the Senior Benefit check is all that is keeping the next wave of homeless from being the seniors. Seniors who worked hard all their lives, paid their bills and played by the rules are struggling now to keep a roof over their head.

Please help us.

Thank you,

January Grizzell

Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits continuation 2018++

From: rose po [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 2:55 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits continuation 2018++

To All Alaska legislative representatives:

As a recipient of these benefits--which I use to purchase medicines and necessary/needed transportation to doctors, pharmacies, grocery stores--I sincerely urge you to continue this senior sustaining program for 2018 onward. Local studies are showing we Ak seniors are a downwardly mobile population facing steeply raising daily living, health, and transportation costs. Even facing these, many of us are trying to remain independently in our homes. Surely, it is much less costly to help us remain so independent than to incur high costs of public-supported and/or assisted living homes?

Certainly, after 40 years here, I do appreciate our Ak budgetary woes and hope for more fiscal responsibility from us all. Perhaps, to streamline the Senior Benefits Program, you could consolidate payments--have the same payment for all who qualify. Would this not reduce administrative costs?

Please, continue this program.

Thank you for your efforts on Alaska seniors' quality of life betterments.

rose potter

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

From: Gina Creedon [mailto:████████████████████@akleg.gov]
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2017 6:12 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Hi,

I am a disabled long term resident of Alaska. At present I receive \$8700/yr in SSI, and \$4344/yr in APA, for a total income of \$13,044 per year. I receive the Alaska Permanent Fund, but that is deducted from SSI over the course of the year at about \$85/mo. This is not an uncommon thing, because many people who came to Alaska interrupted their solid quarters of earnings, and so are not eligible for disability, or retirement, based on the income, but instead get the minimum, the same as I do, and will.

My debt payments and utilities leave me \$240/mo to spend on food, transportation, medical co-pays, soap, toilet paper, postage, and pet food... It is not very much.

APA will end when I am 62, and must convert SSI to regular retirement, and I will get \$597/mo, or \$7,164/yr, and no APA... My total income will drop below my debt payments on my home. I cannot declare bankruptcy because I don't owe enough, and IF I were to owe enough, I would lose my house, because I own too much of it. I cannot refinance my debt because I don't MAKE enough.

I will qualify for food stamps of \$126/mo, or \$4 per day for food. I will have no money at all for transportation, medical co-pays, prescription co-pays for drugs that I need to stay alive, I will have no toilet paper, no soap, no postage stamps, no phone - even the subsidized phone requires taxes to be paid on it to avoid cancellation. I will not be able to pay for heat or electricity. I will no longer be able to support my cat. I am terrified of the 3 years between my mandatory retirement and eligibility for the Senior Benefit, but I *might* make it....

If the Senior Benefit disappears, I will literally just die.

Thank you,

Gina Creedon

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

From: Bert Hansen [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 3:36 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

My name is Bert Hansen I am 59 1/2 yo. I live at Chugach View a Senior and Handicapped Housing. I know first hand that the Senior Benefits Program helps many of the residents here and other places. It needs to continue without it many of the seniors would not be able to survive.

Besides the fact I am just about old enough to qualify!

So it is with great hopes that this program will continue not so much for me but for those that need it now!!

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

From: Eric Thomas [mailto:eric.thomas@akleg.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 9:42 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

I would like to make it known that this voter would like to see the program continue. In my work role I meet elderly community members who are already homeless or moments away from becoming homeless. The payments this program can offer do make a difference in the lives of the recipients and could contribute to keeping another one of our elders housed and out of the shelter system. Please do not allow this program to die.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Eric Thomas

Assessment Specialist, Homeless Family Services

Catholic Social Services

3710 East 20th Ave

Anchorage AK 99508

Phone: (907) 222-7300

Direct: (907) 222-7349

FAX: (907) 258-1091

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House Bill 236

From: Coleen Mielke [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 1:10 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 236

Please pass House Bill 236.....it means the difference between living with dignity and not being able to afford the necessities of life. As life long Alaskan's we beg you to PASS HOUSE BILL 236.

Thank you,

John and Coleen Mielke

Wasilla, Alaska

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits House HSS Listening Session, ACoA Testimony
Attachments: House HSS, HB 236 Listening Session Testimony, 9.28.2017.docx

From: Daniello, Denise L (HSS) [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Senior Benefits House HSS Listening Session, ACoA Testimony

Dear Chair Spohnholz and House HSS Committee Members,

I have attached testimony from the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) that was presented yesterday during the Senior Benefits Listening Session sponsored by the House Health and Social Services Committee. David Blacketer, ACoA's Chair, is copied on this correspondence. Please let me know if there are questions or requests for further information.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for public members to share their stories. It was much appreciated!

Denise

Denise Daniello
Executive Director | Alaska Commission on Aging
Department of Health and Social Services
240 Main Street, Suite 100
PO Box 110693 | Juneau, AK 99811-0693
907.465.4879 | [REDACTED]
www.alaskaaging.org

Healthy Aging for Alaskans Across the Lifespan

House HSS Listening Session: Senior Benefits Extension
September 28, 2017
Testimony

- For the record, my name is Denise Daniello and I serve as the Executive Director for the Alaska Commission on Aging.
- The Commission on Aging is a Governor-appointed board within the Department of Health and Social Services that plans services for seniors, educates Alaskans about senior issues, and advises policymakers on matters related to policy and budget items that affect older Alaskans.
- On behalf of the Commission, we thank Chair Spohnholz and members of House Health and Social Services Committee for hosting this Listening Session.
- Financial security is a serious worry for many older people living on fixed incomes. Senior Benefits is a critical component of the Senior Safety Net. It has a proven track record of providing support for older Alaskans whose incomes are simply not enough to pay for their total food, housing, heat, and health care costs or cover an emergency need like a boiler breaking down during the dead of winter.
- Over the years, growth in the number of seniors participating in the Senior Benefits program has been modest. Since the last time this program was reauthorized in 2014, the annual enrollment figures have increased about an average of **1.7%** statewide, even though the population of people age 65 and older increased **3.7%** annually.
- Statewide, about **one in 7 seniors** (or 14.5% of persons age 65+) participates in this program.
- The risk of living in poverty increases with age, as older people spend down their assets on health care and living expenses. Older Alaskans most likely to benefit from Senior Benefits include seniors who are older than 75; older people living alone; those who worked low paying jobs being unable to save much while they were working and are now receiving minimal Social Security benefits; Alaskans who live subsistence lifestyles in rural and remote communities with little cash income; full-time homemakers and stay-at-home parents who worked outside of the paid workforce; and the oldest old – (people in their 80s, 90s and a growing number of Centenarians) who spend increasing amounts of their fixed income on health and basic necessities.
- The Commission on Aging sincerely thanks Representative Kawasaki for sponsoring HB 236 to extend the Senior Benefits program and the bill co-sponsors. We believe Senior Benefits is good public policy that provides support for older Alaskans who are most vulnerable to economic stresses and allows them to live with dignity and independence, which has a positive impact on senior health and well-being. Thank you.

Mercedes Colbert

From: akhouse@belfast.servershost.net on behalf of WordPress <wordpress@akhouse.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 11:51 AM
To: Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: You got a message "senior benefits-a thank you to you"

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Francesca Burgess
Subject: senior benefits-a thank you to you

Message Body:

Thank you, Representative Kawasaki, for standing up for folks receiving the Senior Benefits amounts. For proposing to extend the Senior Benefits "shelf life".

I read a letter in the Juneau Empire from Representative Dan Saddler, Eagle River, that basically stated he thinks most seniors don't need this financial help. That they have land holdings, boats, extra properties, etc. That we don't need a little extra. That is so not true!!!

Most people I know in my age bracket are struggling through their finances, juggling everything.

And mostly for reasons such as unexpected illnesses/deaths for themselves or a spouse or other family member, or financial turns not expected or any other number of valid reasons. The Senior Benefits are relied upon.

The majority of seniors have worked all their lives, raised families, doing their best to take care of them, and are usually stronger people for it. But finances are quite a major consideration. Most being unable to save substantial money caches in their lifetime.

I really cannot understand how doing away with Senior Benefits will "help" eliminate the Alaska debt.

So, again, I sincerely, immensely thank you for taking time to give your ideas to the legislature.
Your thoughts and hard work are greatly appreciated!!! God bless you richly for your kindness!!!

Sincerely,
Francesca Burgess

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Representative SCOTT KAWASAKI's legislative website
(http://akhouse.org/rep_kawasaki/contact-me/)

Mercedes Colbert

From: House Health and Social Services
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 1:37 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior benefits statewide listenining

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

-----Original Message-----

From: Kimberly A. Starks [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2017 12:01 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior benefits statewide listenining

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of my father

John T.Riley.

If the day comes that senior benefits are cut it would hurt a lot of seniors not just my dad. Senior benefits help greatly with the survival mode as seniors get older.

So with that being said dad and I both hope they are not going to be cut! Including myself for in a few years I to will be eligible!

Thank-you!!

Be Blessed,

Kimberly A. Starks

Sister Kimberly A. Starks

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Letters
Attachments: Senior Letters.pdf

From: Kathy Romain [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 8:58 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Letters

Hello,

We do not have the capability at this time for a large audience to listen into the Teleconference, so we asked our seniors how they used their Senior Benefits. Please see their responses in the attachment. We anticipate more coming.

Thank you!

Kathy Romain



KATHY ROMAIN
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT III

KONA SENIOR CENTER
VINTAGE POINTE MANOR
301 SENIOR COURT
KONA, AK 99021
907.283-8213
907.283-3200 FAX

Helping People to Age with Dignity

My Senior Benefits help with My Food and more

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Dana Zilber Name

~~2222 2222 2222 2222~~ Address

Kenai, AK 99551 Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with I am so thankful
for the Senior Benefits check. It helps
paying my utilities, so please don't
take it away. I count on it so much,
especially in the winter.

Thank you so much

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, <u>Sheride Loan</u>	Name
XXXXXXXXXX	Address
<u>Kenai AK 99611</u>	Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with pay my electric bill, rent and car insurance

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, <u>Randall C. Leitch</u>	Name
<u>1223 Denali Blvd, Soldotna, AK 99669</u>	Address
<u>907-285-7441</u>	Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with my electric bill, gas, oil, over and over. - food items at the grocery store.
I so appreciate the extra help this provides.
Thank you very much.

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Verian K. Peters Name
[REDACTED] Kenai, AK 99611 Address
907- [REDACTED] Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with

my income in the
area. If I did not receive Senior
Benefits I could not pay my bills.
Without your assistance I do without
prescriptions yet. I would not be able to afford

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program. These
extras!

Thank you, Donna Hutton Name

[REDACTED] Address

Honolulu, HI 96811 Phone Number

907-440-1151

My Senior Benefits help with my Medication

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

	Name	Address	Phone Number
Thank you,	<u>Dee Murrell</u>	<u>[REDACTED] Fairbanks AK</u>	<u>[REDACTED] 907-3977</u>

I don't receive ~~My~~ Senior Benefits ^{as of yet} but if they are not in place when I turn 65 it won't be able to supply myself with the necessities as I only receive \$700 a month in Social Security and I will be 65 in July 2018.

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Ann Marie Lee Name
[REDACTED] Address Kenai, AK
907-222-1111 Phone Number 99611

My Senior Benefits help with Paying My Bills,
Senior Electric, N.H. State I could
such things with these
friends

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Angela Page Name
[REDACTED] Address
[REDACTED] Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with Utilities (Electric,
phone) & food

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

	Name	Address	Phone Number
Thank you,	<u>Christina Demakoff</u>	<u>[REDACTED]</u>	<u>[REDACTED]</u>
	<u>Kenai</u>	<u>[REDACTED]</u>	<u>907-370-1111</u>