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April 1, 2021

Commissioner Adam Crum
Department of Health and Social Services
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Subject: Letter of Support for HB103/SB89

Dear Commissioner Crum,

AARP Alaska supports HB103 and SB89 to make Assisted Living Facilities in Alaska more person and family centered by amending the house rules requirement to include the provision that residents “are able to have visitors of their choosing at any time.”

The intent of these bills is to align Alaska law with federal regulations enabling the State of Alaska to continue to receive federal reimbursement for waiver services. HB 103/SB89 will bring Alaska Statutes into compliance with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) settings final rule.

We appreciate that HB103 and SB89 applies to all assisted living facilities and all residents, not solely those utilizing waiver services. This extension will ensure that all Alaskan elders receiving services in assisted living homes are living in conditions as close as possible to those they would have in their own homes. AARP applauds and supports this extension of the application of federal rule guidance.

The pandemic has heightened the importance of visitation access in long-term care facilities. The pandemic has been a deadly combination with isolation at its core for some of the most vulnerable in our state. Likewise, the pandemic has heightened the importance of internet access in combatting social isolation. High-speed internet helps older Americans avoid isolation from family and friends and helps them remain independent as they age. Virtual visits keep residents of long-term care facilities connected when in-person visits are limited. To that end, AARP Alaska requests and suggests that the bills be amended to add: *Access to internet* to Section 3 (a) (4).

Respectfully,
Marge Stoneking
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska

cc: John Lee, Director, Division of Senior and Disability Services

