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March 4, 2022

House Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB292 Support

Dear Reps Snyder, Zulkosky, Spohnholz, Fields, McCarty, Prax, Kurka;
Older Alaskans deserve to live with independence, security and dignity where and how they want to. Very few people ever say, "I am so looking forward to going into a nursing home." So it's no surprise that AARP research consistently shows that most Americans want to remain in their own homes as they grow older. Alaskan seniors rely on critical home care services for help with things like bathing and dressing, rides to the doctor and home delivered meals. AARP supports continued expansion and improvement of Home and Community Based waiver services to better serve our fast-growing senior population.

Seniors want to determine who will provide the services and when and where they will be delivered. Giving people this control enables them to maintain their dignity and maximize their independence. The participant-directed service model acknowledges that people are capable of assessing most of their needs, can determine how best to meet them, and can monitor the quality of services they receive. By allowing individuals to hire relatives, friends, and neighbors to provide services, these programs also expand the workforce, which is a significant challenge. This is especially the case in rural areas that are unserved or underserved by traditional home-care agencies, which Alaska has a preponderance of. HB292 takes a step in this direction by allowing legally responsible adults including spouses to become Personal Care Attendants.

HB292 also proposes to amend the functional level of eligibility to better serve our elders and their families to be able to continue to live independently at home, also a strong step in the right direction. AARP encourages the Alaska Legislature to continue this improvement exploration to ensure it is inclusive of elders with Alzheimer's and Related Dementias, who can be assessed as ineligible because with cueing they can physically perform activities of daily living. However, they cannot live independently as they cannot do these tasks without being told to step by step.

Lastly, HB292 creates safeguards and improved processes for reducing service hours to waiver beneficiaries. Reduced hours of paid caregiving put significant additional demands on already heavily burdened family caregivers and impact the ability of Alaskan families to keep their elders at home, which is best for everyone.

AARP Alaska supports HB292 to protect and improve Home and Community Based Services for older Alaskans.

Respectfully, Marge Stoneking
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska



Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Begich and Representative Tarr,

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 19, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for nine years in Anchorage, AK. This bill is very important to me because I want to see PCAs like myself get benefits and more pay in order to make ends meet.

When hours were cut in the past, I had to walk away from clients, not able to finish important tasks. Due to low wages I had to get a second job. Caregiving is something I am very passionate about. I do this because I love my clients and they need help. I care about each of them and would love to be able to give them more quality care, but with such low wages I can't afford to. I am sure that if wages were higher there would be more people working in this profession and the quality of care would be better for people who need it.

House Bill 292 will take some of the first steps toward ensuring that long-term caregivers can remain in the jobs they're passionate about and clients can age with dignity.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

Carla Jenkins

3424 Tarwater Ave
Anchorage, AK 99508

Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Micciche & Representative Gillham,

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 30, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for over ten years in Kenai. I loved this profession and was a full time caregiver, but because of the low wages and reduced care hours, I had to leave the job because it was not sustainable for my family and me.

Working as a PCA I was reduced to six hours per week at \$16.00/hour, which is not nearly enough to support a family. Therefore, I had to move on to a different job and continue to take care of my father without any supplemental income assistance.

As you know, the cost of living in Alaska has risen, yet caregivers salaries have remained the same. I have a full time job, a family, and have to care for my father. Families are very expensive and need care and attention.

House Bill 292 would help not only my family, but also caregivers who are in similar situations. As it stands, most caregivers do not get paid to take care of their family members. If this bill passed, I could potentially get help taking care of my father who needs daily assistance and to be pushed in a wheelchair. If I was paid for taking care of my father, I could afford to purchase an electric wheelchair so that he could be more independent and have a better quality of life. House Bill 292 will take some of the first steps toward ensuring that long-term caregivers can remain in the jobs they're passionate about and clients can age with dignity.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

Danyell Blom

1705 Aliak Dr Apt 1
Kenai, AK 99611

Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Gray-Jackson and Representative Josephson,

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 17, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for over ten years in Anchorage, Alaska. This bill is very important to me because I have clients that need my help, and there are clients in need of help that can't get it. Caregivers don't earn enough to make ends meet. I am lucky enough to have funds set aside for retirement and can work part time as a caregiver to supplement my income. I love caregiving and my clients, and I feel that I am their advocate. I take pride in my profession, and it means a lot to me to know that my clients will receive quality care.

I have one client who is bed ridden and his daughter has been taking care of him. I only see him five hours per day, four days per week. I can see that it is very hard on her mental and physical health because of physical abuse due to her father's dementia. She doesn't get any breaks or help from other caregivers besides me. It worries me that caregivers are experiencing these kinds of hardships on a daily basis because there is simply not enough funding for caregiving.

I wholeheartedly believe that it's very important to be able to provide care for seniors who need it. They took care of us and we need to take care of them. If House Bill 292 passed, there would be more people willing to go into this line of work because they know that they would be paid fairly, and the quality of care for our beloved seniors would rise dramatically.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

Debby Mullholland

1801 Cindylee Ln
Anchorage, AK 99507

Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Kiehl & Representative Story

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 34, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for over 5 years in Juneau, AK. This bill is very important to me because numerous Alaskans are faced with the hardship of caring for a family member without any compensation, or with a significant loss of income from a job they can no longer work full-time. People should be able to provide quality care for a family member without sacrificing their financial well-being. If I were to get paid for the compassionate care I provide for my mother, it would allow me to fulfill my own needs, financial and otherwise. It would make my family more secure and self-sufficient.

House Bill 292 will take some of the first steps toward ensuring that long-term caregivers can remain in the jobs they're passionate about and clients can age with dignity.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

John Joeright

8496 Bravo Thunder Mountain Road
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Gray-Jackson and Representatives Drummond,

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 18, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for 21 years in Anchorage, AK. This bill is very important to me because when I first started working as a caregiver I was at \$8 an hour and in 21 years I have only gone up to \$18 an hour.

I have devoted my life to this job but the pay does not reflect that commitment and is not enough to make ends meet, especially here in Alaska. We work hard everyday and take care of vulnerable people who cannot care for themselves and we are given absolutely no respect. This bill will not only impact caregivers but will also have a positive impact on the clients. As a caregiver who does this work from the heart and truly loves to do the work, I get attached to clients and to see their hours of care constantly getting cut when the level of care they need does not change. In fact, if the level of care changes at all it usually increases. This is a heartbreaking situation. They can't get quality care when they are only given such little hours and the little hours they have are constantly being taken away. Caregivers often provide a lot of unpaid care to make sure that our clients are getting the care they need. We should be able to provide care and also take care of ourselves, but we simply can't do that.

House Bill 292 will take some of the first steps toward ensuring that long-term caregivers can remain in the jobs they're passionate about and clients can age with dignity.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

Josefina Mora

3407 Spenard Rd Lot 49
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Representative Snyder, Senator Gray-Jackson and Representative Drummond,

I'm a resident of Alaska House District 18, and I'm writing to you today to voice my strong support for House Bill 292. I have worked as a long-term caregiver for 4 years in Anchorage, Alaska. This bill is very important to me because we should be able to care for our families and receive pay for the care that we provide 24 hours a day.

My mother needs 24 hour care, and as her daughter, I can't leave her without it, but I'm unable to get paid for that care or hold down another job. Right now we are living off my mother's SSI. It's how we are able to pay our bills, and we are barely making it. Higher wages would be helpful for caregivers.

I feel like we receive no respect or help. I've been back and forth for over 3 years trying to get her on a waiver to get some sort of help with her care and have made no progress. The process to get on the waiver is extensive and the waitlist is absurd. This bill would impact us a lot, because we would actually be able to afford quality food, be able to buy ourselves clothes, and really just be able to support our everyday necessities. We would have a better quality of life and I could provide my mom with better care.

House Bill 292 will take some of the first steps toward ensuring that long-term caregivers can remain in the jobs they're passionate about and clients can age with dignity.

Thank you so much for bringing this issue forward and taking the time to listen to and work with the long-term care community to begin fixing some of the pressing problems we face in our industry everyday.

Sincerely,

Marie Gomez

3304 Eide St
Anchorage, AK 99503