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

RE: SB216 Support

Dear Sens Wilson, Hughes, Costello, Reinbold, Begich;
Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementia (ADRD) is a chronic disease, not a natural effect of aging. Although advanced age is the biggest risk factor for developing Alzheimer's and other dementias, there are many modifiable risk factors that can be influenced through public health programs to impact Alaskans brain health awareness and behaviors such as nutrition, physical activity, brain injury prevention, alcohol use, and socialization.

Recognizing that, the federal Building Our Largest Dementia (BOLD) Infrastructure Act (P.L. 115-406) passed in 2018 established a public health infrastructure to address dementia, and has funded six states public health programs so far. Passing this bill will position the State of Alaska DHSS Division of Public Health to apply successfully for federal BOLD Act funding to implement a public health approach to ADRD, which has not been done yet in Alaska.

Increased public awareness and healthcare provider training can lead to risk reduction, delayed onset, and earlier diagnosis which all lead to better patient outcomes and reduced healthcare costs. Alaska pays millions of dollars for higher levels of care like skilled nursing and acute care for ADRD patients not addressing prevention and risk reduction at all and under-investing in less expensive community-based services that provide people better outcomes.

AARP Alaska supports SB216 to address Alzheimer's and Related Dementias with a public health approach that increases early detection and diagnosis, reducing risk, preventing hospitalization and supporting dementia caregivers.

On behalf of the fastest growing senior population in the nation and our 77,000 AARP Alaska members, and for the benefit of all Alaskans, AARP Alaska thanks you for your leadership on this issue. We urge your support and action to move and pass SB216 Dementia Awareness.

Respectfully,
Marge Stoneking
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska

