

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



SENATOR ELVI GRAY-JACKSON
SENATE DISTRICT I

Sponsor Statement for Senate Bill 183

Alaska has recently seen an increased demand for home-care services from our senior population and those with disabilities due to both growth in our senior population and increasing waiting periods to access home and community-based services. Currently, we are unable to meet these demands. We have seen many individuals who qualify for Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers and Community First Choice Medicaid State Plan (K) have service levels cut, get stuck on waiting lists for long periods of time, or unable to hire caregivers of their choice. There is a high need for caregivers yet hourly wages for caregivers has declined over the past decade.

This harms Alaskans everywhere. Without access to home-care services, many Alaskans either go without the care they need, rely exclusively on unpaid and untrained friends and family members, or are forced to move thousands of miles away from their community and support systems to receive institutional care.

SB 183 takes steps to ensure that Alaskans who need in-home care receive it, so they may live with dignity and independence at home, while providing more stability to caregivers. This bill will raise the threshold for reduction of benefits, ensure benefit recipients are notified of eligibility assessment results and their options for appeal, and allow for re-assessment of eligibility for those whose levels of service have been reduced over the past two years. It will make it easier for eligible caregivers to become Personal Care Assistants under HCBS waivers and the Community First Choice Medical State Plan (K).

Passing SB 183 helps Alaska meet the in-home care needs of seniors and people with disabilities. It ensures more Alaskans can stay in their homes and communities and maintain their dignity and independence. It also provides improved stability for the direct-care workforce. I hope you'll join me in supporting SB 183.