

HB 285/286/287

Public Testimony

Public Assistance

Behavioral Health

DMVA Support

Grand in Aid Program

Charter Revolving Loan Funds

Senior Benefits

General Suggestions

Doniece Gott

From: Cara Durr <cdurr@foodbankofalaska.org>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 4:13 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Testimony on HB286 - Budget

Mr. and Madam Chair, members of the committee,

My name is Cara Durr, and I am the Director of Public Engagement for the Food Bank of Alaska. I would like to share some thoughts on the importance of funding in HB 286 for the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) Field Services. Our organization pays very close attention to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) because SNAP plays a critical role in addressing hunger and food insecurity in our state, and is the first line of defense against hunger for the majority of our low-income clients. While we do really important work at the Food Bank of Alaska, the truth is we provide only a fraction of the meals that SNAP provides; for every meal served by the Feeding America network, SNAP provides twelve. When people are unable to access SNAP or receive their benefits in a timely manner, they turn to our network of food pantries and meal programs. Right now this means the thousands of households waiting on benefits are putting added pressure on agencies already struggling to meet the need.

SNAP is an important lifeline for Alaskans, particularly during times of economic uncertainty, like those we are facing now. But we hear on an almost daily basis from clients who are waiting on these much-needed benefits; Currently, between SNAP and Medicaid cases, almost 20,000 Alaskans are caught in DPA's backlog. These are children, seniors, veterans, individuals with disabilities, and working families who are suffering because we are unable to serve them well or in a timely manner. This is an unacceptable way to treat our most vulnerable; however, it is understandable why we are in this position. Between FY15 and FY17 SNAP cases have increased 24% and Medicaid cases 35%, and there has been largely no change in staffing levels. When fully staffed, DPA worker to case ratio is currently over 100 cases higher per month than their next highest year. Allowing DPA to add 41 non-permanent positions in areas with low turnover such as Homer, Sitka, Wasilla, and Kodiak would give them the staff resources to address the backlog and keep up with current program demand. This is an important stop-gap measure as they pursue increased efficiencies and other modernization projects.

Please consider funding these temporary positions within DPA. When food-insecure people are able to connect with SNAP, it is not only a benefit for the individual, but for the community as well. It is estimated that in a weak economy, every SNAP dollar spent generates \$1.70 in local economic growth, making it an important community resource and benefit. Giving Alaskans access to food and healthcare when they need it will make our state a safer, stronger, and healthier place.

Thank you to the committee for considering my testimony.

Cara Durr
Director of Public Engagement
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Spring and summer months are the lowest for food donations, but people are hungry year-round. Consider a food or fund drive with your family, neighbors or fellow employees.



Southcentral Foundation (SCF) is the Alaska Native tribal health organization designated by Cook Inlet Region, Inc. (CIRI) and eleven Federally-Recognized Tribes – the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Igiugig, Iliamna, Kokhanok, McGrath, Newhalen, Nikolai, Nondalton, Pedro Bay, Telida, and Takotna – to provide healthcare services to beneficiaries of the Indian Health Service (IHS) pursuant to a contract with United States government under the authority of the Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA) P.L. 93-638.

SCF provides a variety of medical services, including dental, optometry, behavioral health and substance abuse treatment to over 65,000 Alaska Native and American Indian people. This includes 52,000 people living in the Municipality of Anchorage, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to the north, and 13,000 residents of 55 rural Alaska villages. Our services cover an area exceeding 100,000 square miles. SCF employs more than 2,300 people to administer and deliver these critical healthcare services.

SCF's vision is a Native Community that enjoys physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellness; our mission is to work together with the Native Community to achieve wellness through health and related services. SCF has developed and implemented comprehensive health-related services to meet the changing needs of the Native Community, to enhance culture, and empower individuals and families to take charge of their lives.

Many Alaskans, including Alaska Native and American Indian people, still do not have access to behavioral health services despite the clear need for these services. The impact of neglecting these needs extends beyond the health system and results in costs to the General Fund. Neglecting to provide or reducing resources to address behavioral health needs places a greater burden on public safety, judicial and social systems. Partnering with the Alaska Tribal Health System has the potential for realizing high returns on investment by providing behavioral health services across Alaska. This partnership benefits the state on 100 percent Federal Medical Assistance Percentages (FMAP) for tribal members using the system. This integrated setting also reduces the stigma of getting behavioral health care, increasing the likelihood individuals seeking care.

SCF currently operates a Detox program, residential substance use program for women and an outpatient substance use program for both men and women. We have seen time and again the lack of timely and appropriate access to treatment is a barrier to successful treatment because long waits stop us from providing services at the moment of need and that decreases the chance of successful treatment. When customer-owners do get into services, programs cannot always match the population need to the right intensity of service due to the gaps that we have in the State Substance use continuum. Programs do the best they can with a one size fits all approach rather than developing service lines to meet the substance use needs of customers coming out of the Department of Corrections, or Severally Mentally Ill adults for example.

SCF fully supports the \$18 million-dollar request to expand substance abuse treatment across the State. Investing in substance use treatment saves money in the long run. Without

funding to improve access to services there is a significant impact on the State of Alaska including: Increased strain on ERs, first responders and law enforcement and increased costs associated with correctional facilities and recidivism.

The State of Alaska Community Behavioral Health Treatment and Recovery Grant (CBHTR) provides funding for SCF to treat some of our most acute customer-owners. These include the Chronically Mentally Ill (CMI), Severely Mentally Ill (SMI), Severely, Emotionally Disturbed Youth (SED), Residential and Outpatient, Peer Support for Substance use services, and Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES).

SCF opposes the \$24 million-dollar Medicaid cut that is proposed in the FY19 Medicaid budget for behavioral health. These proposed Medicaid reductions will take place slowly over time as eligibility categories, covered services, and/or benefit amounts are changed for the entire Medicaid program. The rebasing that has been planned and implemented over several years is changing the benefit amount, and does not seem likely that reducing the benefit amount will be a part of any Medicaid behavioral health reduction in Alaska. That leaves eligibility categories and covered services, which are slated to change with the 1115 waiver for which the State recently submitted an application. Even if eligibility categories and covered services could be changed more or less immediately, is it really in the best interest of the State to reduce the funds available for behavioral health services now? In the more likely scenario that Medicaid fund reductions take place long before Medicaid eligibility or covered services changes, providers will do the best they can with funds available. If the Senate Finance subcommittee's FY19 recommendation to cut \$24 million from Medicaid Behavioral Health Services ultimately gets adopted this will just set up the same supplemental crisis situation in FY19 and FY20.

SCF has faced severe restrictions in their behavioral health budget through cuts to the CBHTR grant. Those cuts were put in place with the understanding that providers would have the opportunity to make up some of those cuts by billing Medicaid. A reduction in the Medicaid budget puts a significant strain on SCF's ability to adequately provide services to Alaskans.

If increased Medicaid income isn't available, that does remove the major premise for justifying the grant reduction. Several projects such as SB 74 identify the need to increase access to behavioral health services and specifically look to the 1115 waiver application and ASO to do so while saving money. The budget projections associated with SB74 indicated an increase in Medicaid behavioral health expenditures in the first few years of implementation.

If the State continues to cut both CBHTR and Medicaid budgets, SCF and other community providers will have no choice but to reduce or cease providing some services. Proposed cuts will negatively impact the community. If we were to reduce or stop providing services, those customers would have their care diverted to other channels. They would have increased interactions with the justice system, department of corrections, office of children's services, API and first responders. Proposed cuts will force vulnerable Alaskans from receiving less costly

care to costly services not well equipped to appropriately care for their complex behavioral health needs such as emergency rooms and hospitals across the State.

SCF provides services to institutional discharges within 24-hours of discharge, thus creating a safety net for customers until they can receive services with Fireweed Clinic or the Primary Care Center. SCF ensures that a master's level clinician is available all hours of the day to respond to emergencies. Customer-owners discharged from psychiatric hospitalization receive a follow-up appointment with a clinician within 24 hours. SCF continues to work closely with referral agencies to ensure there is no lapse in care when discharged from Department of Corrections and Psychiatric Hospitalization. In addition, SCF provides Psychiatric Emergency Services in the emergency department and provides consultation to the specialty clinics in the hospital.

SCF is in support of HB 286. HB 286 describes a real need for hospitals across Alaska including among the tribal health system. Behavioral health related Emergency Department (ED) visits and inpatient admissions have increased significantly over the recent past. This has caused significant stress for ED and hospital staff and systems. It has increased wait times for API to the point that our new norm has become multiple patients waiting greater than a week's time before being accepted by API. These are acutely ill psychiatric cases that optimally require physical environment accommodations to keep them safe, physical environment accommodations reserved for inpatient psychiatric units that are not available in the general hospital or ED setting. As result of these challenges our staff and patients have been put at increased risks of harm and our hospital system has had to rethink workforce needs around behavioral management and psychiatric care of patients.

In addition to funding HB 286, additional money and resources are needed to fund more inpatient psychiatric beds, more community case management support, more community interventions for substance use and more API beds.

The time to invest in comprehensive behavioral health services for all Alaskans is now. Many of the people who benefit from Behavioral Health Services are the same people that, without access to BHS, have increased interactions with the Justice System, Department of Corrections, Office of Children's Services, Alaska Psychiatric Institute, the homeless population and those seeking jobs. Our concern is that by reducing access to services and by further reductions in funding, will only contribute to rising costs in other areas of the State's budget.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and please contact me if you have any questions or comments.

Katherine Gottlieb, MBA, DPS, LDH
President/CEO
Southcentral Foundation
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Anchorage, AK 99508
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April 6, 2018

Senator Anna MacKinnon
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
Alaska State Legislature
Room 516
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Re: Department of Military & Veterans Affairs FY2019 Budget

Dear Senator MacKinnon:

I write to you today to urge your support for restoring key funding for Alaska's National Guard and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in proposed FY2019 State Operating Budget currently in final consideration in the Senate Finance Committee. Specifically:

- Restore \$221K in general fund spending, which will be matched with \$663K of federal funding, in support of the 176th Wing of the Alaska Air National Guard.
- Restore funding for the Special Assistant Position located in the Governors Washington, DC offices.

The U.S. military presence in Alaska is a critical element in our state's ability to respond to disasters and to defend Alaska from foreign aggressors. The military is also a significant driver of the Alaska economy, contributing over \$3.3 billion in military spending in our state, with the added benefit of contributing significantly skilled workers to our workforce through military retirees and military spouses.

The \$221K, matched by \$663K in federal funds, firmly anchors a critical resource in Alaska in the form of the 8 C-17 jet cargo aircraft that make up the 250-person 176th Wing. This minor amount of general fund spending generates significant impacts in both public safety and the economy of Alaska. Failure to restore this modest level of state funding puts the future of the 176th Wing in serious question and sends a negative message to the Pentagon about the level of support Alaska is willing to provide for maintaining and growing the military's presence in our state.

Funding for the Special Assistant Position in Washington, DC is dwarfed when compared to the millions being spent by other states in their ongoing efforts to influence military policy and budgets. It is clear the Trump Administration is pushing hard to reduce excess property and infrastructure and reform military spending. These are critical issue and policy initiatives that could have a profound effect on the military presence in Alaska. Our government must be at the table to advocate Alaska's importance and support for a strong military deployment within our state. The Special Assistant position in the Governor's Washington, DC offices will protect and promote Alaska's state interests in these policy decisions.

Anchorage is a military town and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) is a vital part of our history, our economy and the fabric that makes our city such a great place to live, work and play. Help us assure a bright future for JBER and Anchorage by restoring these funds in the proposed state operating budget currently before your committee.

Sincerely,

Bill Popp
President & CEO

Doniece Gott

From: Averil Lerman <lermntan@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 11:50 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Alaska Historical Society supports preserving funding for Grant-in-Aid Program

To the members of the Alaska Senate Finance Committee, greetings -

On behalf of the Alaska Historical Society, I write to ask that the Alaska Senate match the Alaska House in funding the Department of Education, State Library Archives and Museums in the amount of \$105,600 for the museums Grant-in-Aid program. The proposed operating budget proposal slates this expenditure to be eliminated.

The Alaska Historical Society is a statewide organization that works with local museums and historical groups around the state. The local groups are preserving Alaska's treasures, supporting the tourism industry, and working with schools. The grant-in-aid program really enables them to provide these services. The grants that are funded through this program are small, and spread widely, but have a very large impact on the recipient organizations and their audiences.

This small line item is divided among more than 12 communities every year. The grant awards help these community museums with basics - buying cabinets for displays, upgrading their air filters - necessary no-frills things, but major expenses for small, non-profit organizations to finance. The grant-in-aid program has been part of the statewide services the Alaska State Museum has offered for decades.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information about the program. Thank you.



Averil Lerman
President, Alaska Historical Society
14020 Venus Way
Anchorage, AK 99515

Doniece Gott

From: Capt Kevin <lostinalaska@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 7:04 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: HB 286

Greetings,

I am Capt. Kevin Burchfield...owner/operator of Lost in Alaska Adventures a local charter fishing operation based in Juneau...I am also the president of the Juneau Charter Operators Association.

It has come to our attention that HB 286 allocates \$3 million out of the current Sport Fishing Business loan fund to cover expenses that are not Sport Fishing related! This is not acceptable! We would prefer that this fund be left intact and continue its intended purpose.

If that money is to be taken out of the fund, then it should be used to serve a purpose directly associated with a/the fund's establishment. \$1 million should be directed to ADFG division of sportfish for the purposes of running the saltwater logbook program and providing funds for the creation of a mobile app for the electronic logbook.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Fishes!

Capt. Kevin

Lost in Alaska Adventures, LLC

www.lostinalaskaadventures.com

907-321-1405

Follow us on Twitter @lostinalaska
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ALASKA CHARTER ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 478 Homer, Alaska 99603

info@alaskacharter.org

www.alaskacharter.org

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Senate Finance Subcommittee

RE: HB 286

Dear Senator Hoffman, and members of the Subcommittee,

The Alaska Charter Association represents recreational charter fishing operators, associated businesses and guided anglers in Alaska with the mission to “protect the rights and conserve the resources of Alaska’s recreational anglers.” Our member businesses operate more than 200 permitted vessels in the Recreational Charter Halibut fishery in Alaska, and our industry contributes millions of dollars to the economy of Alaska every year.

Our Board of Directors voted unanimously to strongly oppose taking Charter Revolving Loan funds and divert them to “11 projects in Commercial Fisheries.”

If that money is to be taken out of the fund, then it should be used to serve a purpose directly associated with the fund’s establishment. \$1 million should be directed to ADFG division of sportfish for the purposes of running the saltwater logbook program and providing funds for the creation of a mobile app for the electronic logbook.

We recognize the budget constraints the Legislature is operating under, but a proposal to redirect funds from their original purpose to another purpose produces no savings.

Thanks for your understanding and for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Jim Martin
Executive Director, ACA

Doniece Gott

From: North Country Charters <northcountrycharters@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 9:58 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee; Sen. Gary Stevens; Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 286

Dear Representative Seaton,

We are a long time halibut charter business in Homer, Alaska, **North Country Charters** since 1979, and are deeply concerned about this reallocation of funds away from the charter industry. We are a small group of family businessmen and women who are an integral part of the tourism industry across the state of Alaska. Reallocating funds away from the charter sector will seriously inhibit our ability to grow as an industry and by default will restrict tourism growth in Alaska.

It is understandable that the State is searching high and low for money to balance our budget. The Charter Revolving Loan Fund has unused funds at this time. We strongly feel that those funds should be reallocated elsewhere *within our industry* for instance to fund Alaska Department of Fish and Game research projects, like logbooks. The funds should be used to benefit the Charter Fishing Sector and **ONLY** the Charter Fishing Sector. To reallocate these funds especially over to the Commercial Sector would be a gross misuse of the trust of your citizens and economical contributors.

The Charter industry in Alaska has been embattled with the federal government for decades over fishing regulations, the battles have hurt tourism in Alaska and have disenfranchised many hard working Alaskans over the years. With such short notice to the public and the stakeholders we urge you. *Please **DO NOT** take this money from us, instead allow us to use it within our industry to create a sustainable and prosperous economy.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Gerri Martin
North Country Halibut Charters
907 235-7620
907 399-7597

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Gerri Martin
North Country Charters
1-800-770-7620
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northcountrycharters@gmail.com



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

April 6, 2018

The Honorable Senator Anna MacKinnon
Senate Finance Committee Co-Chair
Alaska State Capitol, Room 516
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

The Honorable Senator Lyman Hoffman
House Finance Committee Co-Chair
Alaska State Capitol, Room 518
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

Subject: Alaska Commission on Aging Recommendations, HB 285 and HB 286

Dear Senator MacKinnon and Senator Hoffman:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA or the "Commission") thanks you for including intent language, "Protection of Senior Specific Services," as proposed by the Senate Finance subcommittee to safeguard funding in the operating budget for senior services including Community Based Grant Funded Services for Seniors, the Alaskans Living Independently waiver, and Personal Care Services in the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services component, the Pioneer Homes, as well as elder protection services provided by Adult Protective Services (Senior and Disabilities Services) and the Office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority). These services, that comprise the *Senior Safety Net*, promote the health and safety of Alaska's older people, provide support for their family caregivers, and allow seniors to remain living safely in their homes and communities for as long as possible at the lowest cost. In FY2017, senior grant and Medicaid-funded community based services provided support for approximately 30,850 older Alaskans.

The Commission respectfully encourages your support of the following budget recommendations as proposed in the Operating and Mental Health budgets, HB 286 and HB 285, and for appropriate funding for the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program pending passage of CSHB 236. We believe these programs, administered by the divisions with the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the Department of Administration (DOA), are cost effective as they protect the health and safety of all Alaskans, including our older citizens, leverage additional federal funding, and control increases in state spending over time.

Alaska Senior Benefit Program Payments to Recipients, DHSS, Division of Public Assistance: Senior Benefits is a critical safety net program for Alaskans age 65+ with limited incomes. Senior Benefits makes a *real* difference in whether or not an older person is able to live comfortably and afford food, shelter, heating fuel, prescription medications, and other necessities. Senior Benefits helps the oldest of the old, rural elders who live a subsistence lifestyle, elderly people who live alone, and the growing number of low income grandparents who are raising grandchildren with financial assistance to make ends meet. Approximately 11,322 seniors utilize this program statewide (Division of Public Assistance, December 2017). This modest assistance, critical to the health and safety of vulnerable older people, helps them to remain independent and ultimately saves money from their needing higher cost care. Alaska has the highest cost of nursing home care in the nation. According to the FY2017 estimates from the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services continuum of care chart, the average annual cost of nursing home

care per person is \$164,234. *If this program, for example, prevented just 1% of the seniors served by Senior Benefits from requiring institutional nursing home care (or 113 seniors), the annual savings would be almost \$18.6 million (\$164,234 annual cost/person in nursing home X 113 seniors), which is almost the total FY2018 annual budget for Senior Benefits.*

Recommendation: The Commission recommends including sufficient funding for Senior Benefits to allow for at least a 2% annual growth in the recipient population, based on the average caseload growth experienced over the last five years as reported by the Division of Public Assistance. We also recommend that funding be restored, to the greatest degree possible, for the highest income/lowest benefit tier from \$76/month to \$125/month.

Hospital-based Behavioral Health Care, DHSS, Division of Behavioral Health: Seniors who suffer from co-occurring conditions of dementia and serious mental illness can demonstrate behaviors that put themselves and others at risk of harm. While the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API) serves this vulnerable population, they have reached capacity which, in turn, leads to delays in patient admittance and results in people waiting days or longer in hospital emergency rooms. This funding will support treatment and the development of “safe rooms” staffed with licensed mental health professionals to appropriately treat patients in crisis at hospitals. In Juneau, Bartlett Hospital has 10 beds dedicated to serving people with opioid addiction. These beds are full most of the time.

Recommendation: ACoA supports adding \$10.5 million in Alaska Comprehensive Health Insurance Fund (ACHI) funds to secure \$10.5 million in federal Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) funds to support hospitals with demonstrated need in Anchorage, Wasilla, Fairbanks, Soldotna, Bethel, and Juneau to better serve Alaskans with complex behavioral health disorders, and improve safety for patients as well as health care staff.

Public Assistance Field Services, DHSS, Division of Public Assistance: Financial security is a serious worry for many older Alaskans living on fixed incomes. The risk of poverty increases with advanced age. Older people are more likely to spend increasing amounts of their budget on health and other basic necessities. Many depend on food stamps, public assistance, General Relief, heating assistance, and Senior Benefits. Moreover, a growing number of seniors are raising their grandchildren on a limited income. Submitting an application for public assistance may require waiting months before an application can be processed due to the extensive backlog of public assistance applications and excessive worker caseloads. When a person suffers from hunger, poor housing, or lack of heat in the dead of winter, this wait can feel like an eternity.

Recommendation: ACoA supports the Governor’s request of \$2.2 million in the operating budget over three years to hire an additional 41 positions and address the backlog of applications in Public Assistance so that low income Alaskans may receive the assistance they desperately need today.

Public Guardian Support, DOA, Office of Public Advocacy: Vulnerable older Alaskans and other disabled persons who are found by the court to be incapacitated and in need of a protective order depend on public guardians to help them maintain their benefits, manage personal finances, make medical decisions, and secure appropriate housing. While guardians are often family members, friends, or trusted others, some at-risk vulnerable adults have no one to serve in that role and require the services of a public guardian. Currently, the caseload of 100 cases per public guardian is more than double the recommended national caseload of 40 cases per guardian. Funding is needed to hire additional Public Guardians and Guardians Ad Litem to serve vulnerable Alaskans who have been found incapacitated by the court and in need of a protective order. Public guardians protect vulnerable seniors and other disabled Alaskans from financial exploitation and other forms of abuse, ensure proper medical care, access to appropriate services, and prevent crisis situations from occurring.

Recommendation: The Commission supports funding at least up to the Governor’s proposed amount of \$1 million to fund nine additional Public Guardian positions and one Guardian Ad Litem.

Medicaid Payments to Recipients, DHSS, Divisions of Senior and Disabilities Services, Public Assistance, and Behavioral Health: Vulnerable seniors and persons with disabilities rely on Medicaid-funded home and community-based as well as health care services for their health and safety. These services include Health Care Medicaid Services, Adult Preventative Dental, and Behavioral Health.

Recommendation: The Commission supports adequate funding for these services, both in the FY19 Operating Budget and the FY2018 Supplemental Budget, to ensure that seniors and other vulnerable Alaskans have access to services that promote their health and safety.

Information Technology, Telehealth Service System Improvements, DHSS, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS): The Commission supports the Governor's budget request of \$100,000 GF/MH to expand the telehealth pilot project statewide administered by SDS in collaboration with regional health organizations and local clinics. ACoA views this project as a cost effective strategy using technology to provide timely annual reassessments for seniors and persons with disabilities who live in rural, remote communities to determine their eligibility for Medicaid waiver services. This project implements efforts to expand telehealth, as identified in SB74 passed by the legislature in 2016, to reform Alaska's health care system by improving access to care and reducing costs. The use of telehealth will allow for increased access to services and significantly reduce travel and staff costs, without the vulnerable person having to leave their home community for the reassessment. Further, Adult Protective Services will have access to the telehealth project for their investigations involving cases in rural, remote communities.

Companion Services, DHSS, Division of Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS): The Commission supports the Legislature's intent to establish the "companion service" category under Section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act. Companion services serve people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as well as vulnerable older adults with the goal of improving quality of life and well-being. For seniors, companion services provide physical, social, and emotional support as well as cueing and supervision for older persons with mild to moderate dementia who require coaching to complete everyday tasks. Services include light housekeeping, assistance with activities of daily living, medication reminders, transportation, and emotional companionship to help ease the burden of depression, loss of mobility, and mental decline. These services promote quality of life and enable seniors to remain more independent, preventing the need for higher cost care.

The Alaska Commission on Aging appreciates your thoughtful consideration of these operating budget items that impact services used by vulnerable Alaskans, including seniors and persons with disabilities. Thank you for your consideration and support of CSHB 236, reauthorization of the Senior Benefits program for six years. For further information, please contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's Executive Director, at 465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Senator Click Bishop, Vice Chair
Senator Peter Micciche
Senator Natasha von Imhof
Senator Donald Olson
Senator Gary Stevens

Wrangell Legislative Information Office

Wrangell.llo@akleg.gov

Phone: 907-874-3013 Fax: 907-874-3955

Name: Maria Byford

Address: P.O. Box 231

Representing: Self

Bill #/Subject: H.B. 286

Committee: Senate Finance

Hearing Date: 04/06/18

Written Testimony

As Alaskans, we all want to do our part in creating a workable budget for this year.

If one must choose between the two, having the dividend be the same as last year's amount, and not reducing medical funds would be the better choice.

Having this health care coverage is vital to many Alaskans of lower incomes. Having at least a dividend equal to last year will help those same Alaskans.

We must not reduce help needed for Alaskans of lower incomes,

*also not
reduce health
coverage!*

Doniece Gott

From: Michelle Eastty <michelle@coppervalleyak.net>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 10:57 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Written testimony on operating budget

You have asked for public testimony regarding the state budget. These are my requests:

NO MORE TAXES. Taxes (or whatever wording you use for the equivalent of taking Alaskans' money) should be off the table this year. Taking half of our PFD equals a tax of \$1,000 per person, and that is more than enough out of our personal budgets.

When the House **INCREASES** the budget from what the governor recommended, we have a problem. Everyone is saying **CUT**, and now it's being increased?

CUT the University of Alaska's budget. Not just a few million off the increase the House gave them. Take the entire increase out. It's painful, but we all have to sacrifice.

CUT all studies. Vitamin D studies, contraceptive studies, etc. should be off limits when we are prioritizing needs v. wants.

CUT Public Broadcasting. It should not be funded by the state. Radio is important, especially in rural areas, but there are many community radio stations, including one here in the Copper River Valley, that are **NOT** funded by the state. It can be done, and it's not fair that some stations get a boost from government funding while others do the same things without that help.

I'm sure there are other areas that can be cut, but your complicated spreadsheets and buried information make it difficult for Alaskans to figure out exactly what you're funding.

Stop playing games and making deals. Prioritize absolute **NEEDS**, cut the **WANTS**. Don't threaten us with cutting public safety while funding special interest studies. And do it without going into special sessions and costing us even more money!

Michelle Eastty
Glennallen, AK

Doniece Gott

From: Peter Williams <pwilliams@cityofbethel.net>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 10:55 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Chief Eddie Hoffman Highway

Dear Finance Committee,

I would like to encourage the committee to include enough funding for the DOT here in Bethel to maintain the Chief Eddie Hoffman Highway.

We recently have had quite of few sections of this highway fail. DOT was able to temporarily repair those sections but will require extra manpower and material to maintain the high for the next coming year.

I believe Senator Hoffman is aware of the situation.

Thank you,

--

Peter A. Williams
City Manager
City of Bethel
Telephone;
Office: 543-2047 Ext.223 or press 2 then press 1 Cell: 545 4150
Fax: 543-2311
E-mail: pwilliams@cityofbethel.net

Doniece Gott

From: Elizabeth Dahl <elizabethdahl.alaska@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 1:07 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: AK Operating Budget Priorities

Dear Senate Finance Members and Co-Chairs,

I am a life-long Alaskan of 56 years and a retired Educator. My home is Juneau, AK and I support the following:

- No reduction to the Base Student Allocation formula
- SB 287 to fund Public Education separately so School Districts can plan accordingly without issuing pink slips
- NO pink slips or panic for State Workers. The Legislature is obviously unable to complete business in 90 days, AGAIN. Your constituents are more fed up than you are of expensive special sessions, get er done before the 121 day deadline! Re-establish confidence with your constituents or face consequences at the polls.
- A 4.75% percent of value formula established in law as recommended by the Permanent Fund Trustees for sustainably calculating PFDs

Doniece Gott

From: czherriges@gmail.com
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 1:39 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Public Hearing Comment for the record on HB 286, Operating Budget/Loans/Funds HB 285, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Budget HB 287, Education Funding

I am a 40 yr resident of Alaska and a registered voter residing in Wasilla, AK. I am seriously opposed to funding cuts as presented in the bills enumerated below:

HB 286, Operating Budget/Loans/Funds
HB 285, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Budget HB 287, Education Funding

I am particularly opposed to funding cuts or caps to the PFD and Education. I will actively campaign and vote against any legislator currently representing my district if the cuts proposed in these bills are enacted.

To break the compact between the State of Alaska and the People of Alaska by reducing or capping the PFD, or by failing to fully fund the education of Alaskan children would be a heinous error in governance that should not, and will not, be ignored election time.

Please make this email a part of the permanent record of public comment on these bills.

Carol Zo Herriges
Voter ID 02322321
House/Precinct 06-628
6471 N Talgach View Dr
Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 864-0160

Doniece Gott

From: Greg Demers <gdemers@horizonsatellite.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 10:30 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: budget testimony

Dear Senators,

Here are our concerns regarding the operating budget:

- 1.) stop spending down the Permanent Fund savings
- 2.) generate revenue by enacting a graduated personal income tax
- 3.) leave the PFDs alone
- 4.) stop funding mega-projects, i.e., Ambler road, Susitna dam
- 5.) protect renewable resources, (fishing, logging) through conservative, science based management, to generate sustainable revenues, and protect Alaska's unique cultural values

Respectfully,
Greg and Carole Demers
Anchor Point



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Doniece Gott

From: Loretta Pittman <jeanpitt@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 8:01 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Public Testimony

I say bring the Alaska State income tax back and a school tax.

We Alaskan's have to pay for our Alaska State government some way.

Thank You!

Loretta Pittman

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Doniece Gott

From: Francesca A <frescachez@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 7:31 AM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Re: Public testimony HB 286 operating budget

Please submit with my public testimony on Hb 286

Dear Finance Committee,

Cont.

I am against the language of SB 26 which is a POMV to draw 5.25% from the ERA account.
Giving the government a 71/29 split on the PFD. That draw would be 5.2 billion. Return 2016-2017 withheld royalties.

No changes to the PFD without a public vote. You do not have consent. It stays 50/50. This is not a fair and equal deal for the People.

Do not take from the People! Make budget cuts! The budget has only grown. This is not responsible. Stop the spending. Stop hiring more government employees

Francesca Allegrezza

Sent from my iPhone

On Apr 5, 2018, at 9:17 PM, Francesca A <frescachez@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Finance Committee,

I am against HB 286

Pay the Permanent Dividend Fund* in full. You do not have consent to use the people's royalties without the vote of the People. It is our mineral rights. Alaskans own the resources. I do not support touching our earning to try an bandaid reckless spending of our government. Why would we give more money to anyone who has proven they don't know how to balance a budget. You don't give more funds to spend more and get less. 11 billion dollars for less than a million people.

Alaska is not broke. Our resources are just being mismanaged. We are not getting our fair share. We have oil fields pumping oil and the state has no production tax on them. This is not in the best interest of the People.

Pay the Permanent Dividend Fund in Full. Return what was withheld in 2016-2017.

Francesca Allegrezza
Anchorage, Alaska

* PERMANENT -
[pur-muh-nuh nt]

adjective

1. existing perpetually; everlasting, especially without significant change.
2. intended to exist or function for a long, indefinite period without regard to unforeseeable conditions:

DIVIDEND-

[div-i-dend]

noun

1. *Mathematics.* a number that is to be divided by a divisor.
2. *Law.* a sum out of an insolvent estate paid to creditors

FUND-

fuhnd]

noun

1. a supply of money or pecuniary resources, as for some purpose: *a fund for his education; a retirement fund.*
2. supply; stock: *a fund of knowledge; a fund of jewels.*

3. **funds,** money immediately available; pecuniary resources: *to be momentarily without funds.*
4. an organization created to administer or manage a fund, as of money invested or contributed for some special purpose.

verb (used with object)

1. to provide a fund to pay the interest or principal of (a debt).
2. to convert (general outstanding debts) into a more or less permanent debt, represented by interest-bearing bonds.
3. to allocate or provide funds for (a program, project, etc.).

Doniece Gott

From: Tom Ohaus <tom@anglingunlimited.com>
Sent: Friday, April 06, 2018 5:16 PM
To: Senate Finance Committee
Subject: Charter Revolving Loan Fund

Senate Finance Committee,

My name is Tom Ohaus and I have been a lodge and charter boat operator in Sitka, Alaska for 30 years. We have two lodge buildings, run 8 boats and make substantial contributions to the local economy. We also pay well into six figures in sales, bed, and fish box tax. While I have not had a need to access the Charter Revolving Loan Fund, I know this money was set aside to benefit charter operators and sport anglers in the State of Alaska. If the Senate Finance Committee wishes to remove money from this fund, it should be used to serve a purpose directly associated to the fund's establishment. **At least \$1 million should be directed to ADFG Division of Sportfish for the purposes of running the saltwater logbook program and providing funds for the creation of a mobile app for the electronic logbook.**

Tourism is vitally important to the Southeast Alaska economy and the logbook program is necessary to meet federal halibut reporting requirements. I encourage you to make your decision with these two items in mind.

Captain Tom Ohaus

--

Captain Tom Ohaus
Owner/Operator Angling Unlimited
<http://www.AnglingUnlimited.com>
cell: 508-415-0780