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March 23, 2012

The Honorable Dan Saddler, Co-Chair  
House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs  
Alaska Capitol, Room 409  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Steve Thompson, Co-Chair  
House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs  
Alaska Capitol, Room 428  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 366 (House Community and Regional Affairs Committee)—Support

Dear Co-Chairs Saddler and Thompson:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the House Special Committee on Military and Veterans' Affairs to support HB 366, sponsored by the House Community and Regional Affairs Committee.

HB 366 is based on model legislation recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). HB 366 would provide a comprehensive statewide mutual aid system that would enable all political subdivisions to receive and render aid to other subdivisions in case of disasters and emergencies. Some mutual aid agreements already exist but SB 208 would provide a blueprint that would be consistent throughout Alaska.

AARP believes that HB 366 would benefit our members as well as the general public.

Surveys of the older population (over 50) indicate that of those who self-identify that they will need help evacuating their homes in a natural disaster, half indicate that they will require help from someone outside their household. Older people, who face special health and other risks, will likely be more vulnerable during disasters than the general adult population. Recent disasters have highlighted how devastating to older adults such events are. Physical capacity and resiliency place frail older adults at special risk. For example, a study conducted by AARP after Hurricane Katrina found that many older adults lost their lives when they were abandoned in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Older adults may lack the ability to get to emergency food and water distribution centers. Older adults rely disproportionately on informal networks for support. When disaster strikes, these networks may be destroyed, leaving older adults at high risk.

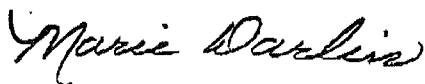
We understand that HB 366 is about governmental entities working together. We also understand that our members and the general public will benefit when government emergency planning takes place at all levels.

AARP urges an "AYE" vote on HB 366.

Should you have any questions about our position, please feel free to contact me (586-3637) or Patrick Luby, AARP Advocacy Director (907-762-3314).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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CC: Vice-Chair Carl Gatto  
Representative Alan Austerman  
Representative Sharon Cissna  
Representative Bob Lynn  
Representative Bob Miller  
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