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February 14, 2012

The Honorable Wes Keller, Co-Chair
House Health and Social Services Committee
Alaska Capitol, Room 432
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: HB 310 (Herron)—Support
*State Immunization
Program*

Dear Chair Keller:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the House Health and Social Services Committee to support HB 310, authored by your Committee colleague Representative Bob Herron and co-sponsored by Representatives Peggy Wilson, Mia Costello, Max Gruenberg, Bryce Edgmon, and Lindsey Holmes.

In the past, Alaska and Alaskans of all ages have benefited from a comprehensive vaccination program primarily funded by the federal government. HB 310 would provide state funding to make up the shortfall on a temporary basis.

From the standpoint of older citizens, AARP recognizes that providing free vaccines for influenza, pneumonia, and Tdap to adults is a good effective public health measure.

From the standpoint of grandparents, AARP members recognize that restoring the thirteen previously covered vaccines for children is an excellent decision for our state leadership to make.

According to the Vaccine Research Group at the Mayo Clinic, 50,000 to 70,000 Americans die each year from diseases that could be prevented by vaccines.

Vaccine-preventable diseases have many costs, both economical and social. Parents who need to stay home to take care of sick children lose time from work. Preventable diseases also result in more physician visits, hospitalizations and even death. Vaccinations work. Think of the savings for Medicaid and PERS and TRS if we can restore the vaccination program and prevent costly illnesses.

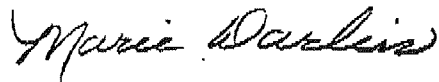
Vaccines are like seat belts. We wear them to prevent injury or death if someone decides to run a red light. We still need to have vaccines available to prevent injury or death from bacteria and viruses that exist and can still be passed on to us.

AARP requests an "AYE" vote on HB 310.

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 Alan Dick
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