



## **Senator Hollis French**

### **Sponsor Statement**

#### **SB 87 – Grants for Seniors’ Medical Care**

Our Medicare system is broken in Alaska. Too many seniors cannot find a primary care doctor. Physicians who do accept Medicare patients are losing money with each visit, as the cost of providing care exceeds the federal reimbursement rate.

We can’t wait for the federal government to fix Medicare; instead, we need to act today. This legislation will immediately improve seniors’ access to primary care services in Alaska.

SB 87 establishes a grant fund for health care providers serving Alaskans who are sixty-five years of age or over. The grants will be paid to medical providers that increase primary care access for Alaska’s seniors. All health care providers - including physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants - would be eligible for grants.

Access to primary care improves health outcomes and reduces medical costs. Instead of waiting for small ailments to become serious problems, primary care prevents expensive medical treatments. Instead of requiring an emergency room visit, primary care keeps our seniors healthy.

Without this bill, doctors can’t afford to provide seniors with these crucial preventative services. For most primary care visits, a physician receives \$60 less from Medicare than they receive from private health insurance. In some instances, physicians lose well over \$100 per visit.

This legislation is an ounce of prevention that will prevent the need for a pound of cure. It makes fiscal sense. Our seniors have paid into the Medicare system all their life. I urge your support of this legislation, to make sure that our seniors receive the care that they deserve.