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January 27, 2011

The Honorable Kevin Meyer, Co-Chair
Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 103
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Joe Thomas, Co-Chair
Senate Education Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 514
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

RE: SB 3 (Wielechowski)--Support

Dear Co-Chairs Meyer and Thomas:

On behalf of the members of AARP in Alaska, we encourage you and your colleagues on the Senate Education Committee to support SB 3, authored by Senator Bill Wielechowski with primary co-sponsors Senators Ellis, Davis, Egan, French, Kookesh, McGuire, Menard, Paskvan, and Co-chair Thomas.

AARP is the world's largest organization of grandparents. We are concerned about good nutrition for everyone's grandchildren.

We have many grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.

- As of October, 2007, Alaska had 8,188 children living in grandparent-headed households (4.3% of all the children in the state).
- Of the children living in households headed by grandparents in Alaska, 5,110 are living there without either parent present.
- 5,419 grandparents report they are responsible for their grandchildren living with them (43% are Alaska Natives, 41% are White).
- 67.4% of these grandparents are under age 60. Many of them are still in the workforce.
- 11.5% of these grandparents live below the federal poverty level.

A healthy future for Alaska's children should be something everyone can agree on.

You will see all the statistics about how school breakfasts and lunches improve education for these children. Their test scores are higher, their cognition is enhanced, and they make fewer mistakes and work faster. Children who participate in the school nutrition programs have fewer problems with obesity and school violence even drops. All these factors will help grandparents who are raising grandchildren, especially those who are

still in the workforce and leave home before the grandchildren leave for school. Obviously these programs are even more important for those 11.5% of grandparents raising grandchildren who are themselves below the poverty level.

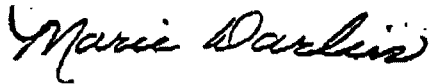
Grandparents don't plan on raising their grandchildren. Circumstances happen to families and these grandparents step up to the plate to take care of these kids and keep them out of the foster care program. SB 3 is one more way that the state can help support the efforts of these grandparents. They can certainly use it.

AARP requests an "AYE" vote on SB 3.

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 Bettye Davis
Senator Hollis French
Senator Gary Stevens
Senator Bill Wielechowski
Senator Johnny Ellis
Senator Dennis Egan
Senator Albert Kookesh
Senator Lesil McGuire
Senator Linda Menard
Senator Joe Paskvan