

The TRUST
The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

February 16, 2014

Representative Mike Hawker
Alaska State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: HB 263 Letter of support

Dear Representative Hawker,

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is pleased to write a letter in support of HB 263, an Act extending the Alaska Senior Benefit payment program through the year 2021. On behalf of our beneficiaries who often times represent the lowest of income Alaskans and those residing in families who have disabling conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease, we thank you for the work to extend this important program that is set to end in June of this year.

In Alaska, it is estimated that approximately 5,000 people currently have Alzheimer's disease or Related Dementia conditions and are relying on family members, our social services safety net or the Pioneer Homes for assistance in negotiating the challenges of this disease. Presently, there are about 75,000 Alaskan aged 65 years and above, an age group that is increasingly likely to develop a disabling condition such as Alzheimer's disease. In ten years, this number will increase sharply and in twenty years estimates indicate there will be approximately double that number at 150,000. Assisting families in maintaining a loved one's care in the home or in the community as close to home as possible has been demonstrated as a way to reduce overall state costs time and again.

Many communities struggle with high costs of housing, fuel and basic necessities. The median rent for Anchorage is \$988.00 for a one bedroom apartment. Other communities, particularly in rural areas have much higher costs for housing and the supportive services and necessities that accompany conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

We support this bill as a way to enable families to continue to care for loved ones at home and to assist Alaskan elders in maintaining economic stability through these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Jeff Jessee, CEO

