

**From:** [Frank Box](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Cc:** [Doug Toelle](#); [Flora Olrun](#); [Cathy Gerby](#)  
**Subject:** Budget cuts will negatively affect Vulnerable Alaskans (remember, even the healthiest Citizens are only temporarily able bodied)  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 08, 2016 11:45:36 AM

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My Name Is T. Frank Box, I currently work at Access Alaska as a Certified Brain Injury Specialist, and Independent Living Advocate. In my previous career as a North Slope welder fabricator I remember what the price of oil can do to our state budget and the potential difficulties in planning for the future. As a person that survived a disabling medical condition and went on to become employed as a productive contributing member of a nonprofit that helps people in similar situations I can speak to the financial efficiencies that Centers for Independent Living afford. Previously much of Access Alaska's funding came through the SOA Department of Labor- currently that has been moved to Department of Senior & Disability Services. As a former disabled worker that was restored to functional independence through programs that are currently on the chopping block, I am advocating for a closer examination of the cost saving potential before the final draft is signed.

IL Services work well with other existing programs, and pick up the slack when other resources fall short. People do not get turned away because they cannot pay or do not have Medical Insurance. This issue is close to my heart as I fell into the otherwise healthy group until a seizure in the middle of the night, two brain surgeries, 30 Radiation treatments, and 12 months of chemotherapy left me unable to work in my former occupation. Even though I had adequate health insurance while employed, those benefits were quickly depleted. Attempting to advocate for myself after part of my brain had been removed was not a realistic option. IL services advocates assisted me in getting SSDI disability benefits, and helped give me the stability to succeed in completing retraining for workforce reentry to a new profession and transition from disability benefits to self-supporting employment as I became ready.

Now I get to see it every day at my job, people that would otherwise fall through the cracks that may be waitlisted for Medicaid services come in to get DME (durable medical equipment) crutches, walkers, miscellaneous braces & supports, in addition to incontinence supplies, hospital beds, etc.... Access Alaska's DME/reuse program saves the state of Alaska Medicaid & other insurances between 400 and \$600,000 a year. So cuts to these type of programs seems penny wise and dollar foolish. As do cutting services that may keep people out of costly state-funded institutions were actually working and contributing to the financial prosperity of the state.

I would suggest a broad based state income tax, and looking at restructuring the recently modified oil tax rate along with discontinuing the unneeded expense of the lawsuit against Gov. Walker over Medicaid expansion before looking at the permanent fund dividends.

On Tuesday, March 1 at the head injury support group meeting the 20 members present were polled on their opinions and the agreement among us was unanimous about waiting until other options are exhausted before going into the permanent fund which many of them depended on for co-pays and school supplies for their children.

On Tuesday, March 15 my co-facilitator will assist me at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the month she also facilitates the DD grant services here at Access Alaska and relies on PCA & paratransit

services to remain independent /gainfully employed. Our DME/reuse data entry technician also relies on the services to remain independent/gainfully employed. As a matter of fact, 51% of Access Alaska's employees and board members experience some sort of disability.

***T. Frank Box***

***Access Alaska Inc.***

***Independent Living Advocate***

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***"Life holds no greater prize, than the opportunity to work hard at work worth doing."***

***Theodore Roosevelt***

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