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Dear Chairman Wilson and members of the Senate Health and Social Services Committee:

The Foundation for Government Accountability (FGA) urges the Alaska Senate to pass Senate Bill 193, which would implement commonsense work requirements for able-bodied adults on Medicaid. FGA works to maximize human potential through the power and dignity of work by equipping policymakers with solutions that promote work, reduce dependency, and increase opportunity.

Implementing a work requirement for Medicaid would require able-bodied adults to work, volunteer, or train at least 20 hours per week in order to receive Medicaid benefits. The reform would bring Medicaid in line with other welfare programs that require able-bodied adults to work in order to remain eligible, as required by federal law. The work requirement would not apply to the disabled, the elderly, or new mothers, among other groups.

These groups—the ones that Medicaid was originally designed to assist with temporary aid—would be reprioritized if SB193 were to pass. The tax dollars saved by moving able-bodied Alaskans from welfare to work would be preserved for the truly needy, schools, public safety, and infrastructure.

The benefits of SB193 go beyond savings. Studies have shown that without work requirements, the vast majority of able-bodied adults on Medicaid are not working at all. But work has the power to change lives. By empowering adults who are able to work, this bill will help end dependency and spark self-sufficiency.

Work provides a life of dignity and value. It opens the door to a larger community, to new opportunities to make Alaska a better place. And volunteering and training have similar effects—they open the door to future employment opportunities and teach valuable skills and lessons that a lifestyle of dependency can never teach.

Alaska has an opportunity today, and it must not be overlooked. It is an opportunity to make tomorrow a better day for those trapped in dependency, to help end the cycle of dependency for the next generation, and to prioritize truly needy Alaskans.

You have the opportunity to promote the power of work today and to join nearly a dozen other states who have already implemented or are pursuing Medicaid work requirements. SB193 will help end dependency and move thousands of Alaskans from welfare to work—I urge you to vote in support of that measure.

Sincerely,

Christie Herrera
Vice President for State Affairs and Policy Fellow