

March 24, 2021

Commissioner Adam Crum
Department of Health and Social Services
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, AK 99503

Dear Commissioner Crum,

I am writing this letter to show my support for House Bill 103 and Senate Bill 89 which are designed to bring our state statutes in line with the federal regulations for Assisted Living.

In 2003, I started to manage a small Assisted Living home in Palmer. I continued to do so and expanded my management to a total of four facilities in the Mat-Su Valley that I have successfully managed for the past 19 years. My experience with Assisted Living in Alaska is extensive. We live in a state with many special circumstances and needs because of how our communities are so different. I know that this is why our current state statutes are written the way they are. They offer a level of flexibility for the facility so that they can operate in different areas of the state.

The only problem with these current statutes is they can be confusing and sometimes unfair to the residents that live in them. Federal regulations that have come out in the past five years have changed how we run these facilities. When I first started the focus was on the management of the business. The facility management could control what a resident could do, when they could do it, and make decisions for the person that would sometimes be more beneficial for the facility.

The federal regulations changed this by making it very clear that the facility needs to adjust to the choice and desire of the resident that lives in the home. They outline that what a person chooses is the most important thing, and that it's the responsibility of the facility to adjust the business practice to ensure that this happens. These regulations have made it more difficult to manage the Assisted Living homes, but speaking as someone that manages them, it can be done through creative thinking and problem solving.

Overall, the federal regulations have shown me that when the resident has the choice to live in the way they choose, they are happier and feel more in control of their life. I know that House Bill 103 and Senate Bill 89 are designed to bring our state statutes in line with these federal regulations and I fully support this as an Alaskan with parents that need Assisted Living and as a 19-year provider of these services. It's only fair that the people that need assisted living know they are still in control of their lives even if they need help with some aspects of it.

A majority of the facilities in the state currently follow the federal guidelines but I know that by reading House Bill 103 and Senate Bill 89 that this also requires that all facilities follow them moving forward. This is important because it can be confusing for one facility to do things one way and a different facility to do it another way. The key is that every Alaskan that needs these services be treated the same, no matter which facility they live in.

Assisted Living licensing is difficult and sometimes confusing. I will always support any state law changes that make the licensing statutes clearer and that do not change from the federal regulations. When this happens, it puts a difficult burden on the state licensing professionals to make judgements and determinations that can sometimes put them at odds with the providers. Changing state statutes to align with federal expectations will make it more clear for the licensing professionals to communicate expectations with all providers moving forward.

Commissioner Crum, I hope that this letter helps move these important parts of legislation forward. I am willing to clarify any of this at any time to you, your office or any of our state representatives that would need my help. Long term care is very difficult, it is volatile and expensive. House Bill 103 and Senate Bill 89 help make providing long term care in Alaska clearer and provides better services for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Nathan Dahl
Administrator
Colony Assisted Living Homes