



ALASKA STATE HOSPITAL &
NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

February 16, 2022

House Health and Social Services Committee
State Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

RE: ASHNHA Supports HB 308 – Dementia Awareness

Members of the House Health & Social Services Committee,

The Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home Association (ASHNHA) represents more than 65 hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, and other health care partners distributed across Alaska's vast expanse of over half a million square miles, from PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center in Southeast Alaska to Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital in Utqiagvik, north of the Arctic Circle. For over 60 years, ASHNHA members have worked together to improve health care in Alaska.

ASHNHA supports HB 308 – Dementia Awareness. Our members care for Alaskans who suffer from Alzheimer's Disease and related dementias. We support efforts to increase the public's awareness of this disease. Working together we can impact this public health issue by increasing early detection and diagnosis, reducing risk and preventing avoidable hospitalizations.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Jared C. Kosin, JD, MBA
President & CEO



Fairbanks Senior Center/North Star Council on Aging
1424 Moore Street. Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Phone: 907-452-1735 / Fax: 451-9974

February 15, 2022

House Health and Social Services
Ref: Support for HB 308

Dear House Health and Social Services,

HB 308 was presented, and supported by, Alaska Commission on Aging, AgeNet, Alzheimer's Association, and Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska. This bill specifically asks of the Department of HSS to develop an acknowledgement of Alzheimer's and Related Dementias (ARD) as an Alaska public health priority. The acknowledgement of this health priority is a key step in establishing a public awareness campaign making the State of Alaska eligible to apply for BOLD Initiative funds through Center for Medicare (CMS). These federal dollars would pay for a Dementia Coordinator position to enhance our state efforts in assisting the Pioneers "Age in Place". There is currently no one office or position that is focused specifically on ARD and Alaska, having the title of the state with the fastest growing aging population, supporting this bill gives attention to an accelerating diagnosis affecting us all.

By supporting HB 308, it places the state in a strategic position to obtain Federal Bold Initiative funds, which will pay for the public awareness efforts and support staff. No fiscal note needs to be attached to this bill. The support of this bill in its original written form allows Alaska, without cost to our state, to develop early detection and prevention programs, provide surveillance, and collect Alaska specific data. The HB 308 will also allow evaluation of programs, recommend best practices that support individuals and their caregivers who experience ARD, and disseminate education to primary care providers, first responders and the general public.

Respectfully,

Darlene Supplee
Executive Director
Fairbanks Senior Center
907-4523-1735
Nscoa.manager@alaska.net

February 14, 2022

Representative Liz Snyder
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Zack Fields
Representative Ken McCarty
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Christopher Kurka

Via email: House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

Honorable Members of the Committee:

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska (ARA) strongly **supports HB 308**. ARA is a statewide community-based service provider that has supported tens of thousands of Alaskans affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias since 1984. We achieve this through caregiver training classes, confidential consultations, support groups, care coordination, referral services, socialization activities and more.

We believe there will be a tremendous benefit to Alaskans with the adoption of legislation directing DHSS to develop and implement a statewide dementia awareness program. At present and with support from DHSS, Division of Senior & Disability Services, ARA engages in limited awareness activities pertaining to dementia as part of our mission. Necessarily, those activities are focused on individuals with cause for concern about themselves or a loved one, or who have been diagnosed with a dementia disorder of any type. The directive of HB 308 is much broader than what is being supported, and is truly necessary if Alaska is to develop the capacity to fully support its residents who live with these conditions or care for someone who does. That Alaska must develop greater capacity, in light of our aging population numbers, cannot be gainsaid.

To us, a key provision in the legislation is the directive that DHSS's program secure the full benefits available to Alaska under 42 U.S.C. 280c-3 *et seq.* to the extent consistent with state law. Those federal benefits are administered through the CDC, funding available to state or local public health authorities. From our perspective, expanding the role of the Division of Public Health and the tremendous credibility that they hold would considerably improve the effectiveness of dementia awareness efforts in segments of the population where it would do much good: those who are not yet worried about their own forgetfulness, or symptoms in a loved one. Rather, raising awareness in those who have no symptoms and who are decades away from displaying symptoms may result in improved lifestyle and behavioral choices that reduce the risk of developing dementia – or declining rapidly through the course of illness.

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Senior service providers, tribal health authorities, health care providers and long term care providers all have a role to play in Alaska's dementia awareness efforts. That work is underway. ARA does quite a bit. But a coordinated, well-supported and population-level effort is what's needed now. This legislation is the best we've seen to position Alaska to succeed at it.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Pamela R. Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pamela R. Kelley
Executive Director

Katy Giorgio

From: Jill Simek <jill.simek@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 13, 2022 8:26 PM
To: House Health and Social Services
Cc: Rep. Laddie Shaw
Subject: Public Testimony for HB308

House Health & Social Services Committee:

I am member of the Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska Board of Directors. We are dedicated to supporting Alaskans directly affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias. Alaska must support our Seniors & Elders by recognizing dementia as a public health issue. The burden is large, the impact is great, and there are ways to intervene.

As a member of Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska and as an Alaska citizen, I **support HB 308**, as the need for a comprehensive statewide dementia awareness campaign is growing every year. Older Alaskans face the greatest risk of developing dementia, and our state is aging rapidly. The financial impact on the state, and the human impact on its residents, will be great. Let's do everything we can to be ready.

Enhancing public awareness to promote early detection and healthy lifestyles to reduce risk was the fourth goal in the *Call to Action* (January 2021). That report described Alaska's 10-year plan for addressing dementia. The State of Alaska has not yet undertaken this type of campaign. HB 308 directs the Department of Health and Social Services to do so, and to pursue the federal resources now available to assist.

The benefit of a broad public awareness campaign will rest in its ability to reach those Alaskans who are not already experiencing dementia or its onset. Long before symptoms occur, healthy lifestyle choices can reduce risk. Early detection and symptom management can slow a patient's rate of decline. Early awareness is necessary if Alaska is to improve our odds against the incoming tide of these brutal conditions. An awareness program aimed at all audiences, not just seniors and those who provide care, is essential to the success of that goal.

On a personal note, my mother is a sufferer of Vascular Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. Sadly, for her, it was a long road to diagnosis, and I feel with more education and awareness much of the uncertainty and frustration my family experienced might have been avoided. Additionally, early detection may have provided opportunities for better treatments to slow decline, or at the very least, better prepared my family for the long and difficult time ahead.

Please consider my story and testimony as HB 308 is considered. Alaskan families need your support for this bill.

Respectfully,

Jill Simek
Vice President, Board of Directors
Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska



February 12, 2022

Legislature of the State of Alaska
Division of Public Health

RE: Bill HB308

Health TIE is an active member of the Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative and works with both senior social service agencies and entrepreneurs building solutions to provide support for seniors and their caregivers. I believe the adoption of Bill HB308 will improve the lives of Older Alaskans as well as the lives of their families and friends who care for them.

The majority of people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are receiving care in their homes. Each year, more than 16 million Americans provide more than 17 billion hours of unpaid care for family and friends with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. ([US Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)). Every family providing this care can tell you how heartbreaking, difficult, and expensive care is and how they are often stretched beyond their mental, physical, and financial limits.

As challenging as the current situation is, it is about to get worse. The *Silver Tsunami*, the dramatic shift when baby boomers will increasingly need care, is coming. In a February 8, 2022 Institute for Economic Research presentation titled "The Economic Implications of Changing Demographics in Alaska", Dr. Ralph Townsend illustrated the challenges Alaska will face. Alaska follows the national trend of an increasing older population, but his research indicates there will be a *five-fold* increase in Alaska's senior population; due to demographic trends, Alaska will get older faster than other states.

It is critical that Alaskans prepare for the increasing demands for care and social support for seniors, especially those living with Alzheimer's and related dementias. A good start is to create a dedicated public health position to address Alzheimer's Disease in Alaska by encouraging DHSS to apply for BOLD Act funding. In addition, it is important to ensure Older Alaskans have access to critical services by providing a 6.5% cost-of-living increase (based on 2021 data from the Department of Labor) to Older Americans Act programs for seniors. (*Reference: The Community Based Grants line is under senior and disability services at line 2021 on Page 19.*)

Thank you for your consideration of Bill HB308.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Summers

Health TIE, Managing Director
jacqueline@healthtie.info / (907) 227-9421



Bigelow Community Consulting, LLC
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February 10, 2022

TO: House.Health.And.Social.Services@akleg.gov

RE: House Bill No. 308 "An Act relating to dementia awareness."

First, thank you to Representative Stutes for her awareness, action and advocacy related to ADRD (Alzheimers Disease and Related Dementias).

I fully support House Bill No. 308. As a professional working within the continuum of care environment and a former caregiver for a parent with ADRD; I am aware of the much-needed infrastructure and awareness for persons living with dementia.

Alaska's aging population is growing faster than any other segment of our population. Increasingly, and projected to grow exponentially; persons living with ADRD is going to overwhelm our healthcare system. It is time for Alaska to join the ranks of states who have implemented BOLD funding and programs. HB 308 begins the critical journey to serving our ADRD elders who have served us at every level of our culture and society.

I fully support House Bill No. 308.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara L. Bigelow". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "B" and a trailing flourish.

