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March 8, 2022

House Labor & Commerce Committee  
Alaska Legislature  
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: HB363 Support

Dear Rep Fields, Spohnholz, Schrage, Nelson, Snyder, Kaufman, McCarty;

AARP Alaska supports HB363 to authorize the implementation of the architecture for successful universal Broadband deployment for all Alaskans, as proposed by the Governor's Task Force on Broadband

AARP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works on issues that matter to elders and their families, including caregiving, aging in place, and access to affordable high-speed internet service, also known as broadband.

Alaska has the fastest growing senior population in the country and most of us want to stay in Alaska as we age. Ubiquitous, affordable, adequate high-speed internet access can help make this possible, benefiting all segments of our society including seniors.

For elders, access to broadband makes aging in place more possible by providing access to telehealth, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, teleworking, connections with friends and family, educational opportunities, and access to vital assistance programs. Aging in place is good for elders, families, communities, and for the State of Alaska, as it reduces the cost of long-term care to the State budget dramatically.

For our elders, poor or no broadband access and a lack of affordability not only limits access to essential public health info, social services, telehealth, and apps that manage chronic conditions and support caregivers, but it also leads to risk of social isolation, which has been linked to negative health outcomes, reduced quality of life and premature death.

**AARP Alaska supports HB363 to establish the Alaska Broadband Office in the Department of Commerce and Community Development, create the Broadband Parity Adjustment Fund, and establish the Statewide Broadband Advisory Board to increase access, affordability to high-speed internet and digital equity for older Alaskans. We would encourage you to ensure that the Advisory Boards include consumer representatives who can speak to the interests of a diverse base of consumers, including older consumers.**

Respectfully, Marge Stoneking  
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska

