

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Senate Health and Social Services](#)  
**Subject:** Senate Bill 106  
**Date:** Monday, April 03, 2023 7:16:46 PM

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April 3, 2023

Dear Senate Health & Social Services Committee Members,

Alaska continues to struggle to attract and retain qualified employees in all business sectors. Over the last several years Alaska businesses have strategized different ways to address the shortage of trained direct care workers. The Social Services sector, especially, has been severely affected. The lack of qualified, trained workers has negatively impacted our ability to provide care for our most venerable Alaskans.

To address this shortage, legally responsible individuals (such as spouses, legal guardians, parents) should be allowed to provide, and be paid to provide, personal care services to eligible recipients of Medicaid. During the Covid pandemic, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) allowed legally responsible individuals to provide personal care services:

*“Pursuant to section 1135(b)(1)(B) of the Act, CMS approves a waiver to temporarily allow payment for 1905(a) personal care services rendered by legally responsible individuals (which could be inclusive of legally responsible family caregivers) providing that the state makes a reasonable assessment that the caregiver is capable of rendering such services. This waiver will ensure that medically necessary services are furnished in the event the traditional provider workforce is diminished or there is inadequate capacity due to the public health emergency.”*

However, the 1135 waiver only lasts as long as the Public Health Emergency. The Public Health Emergency is set to end on May 11, 2023. Senate Bill 106 asks the State of Alaska to amend its Medicaid state plan and ask for federal approval to allow this care option for families receiving personal care services through the state’s participation in the Social Security Act’s “1915(k) option,” also known as Community First Choice.

Amending the Medicaid state plan will provide more patient choice and satisfaction and it has the potential to save the state millions of dollars in nursing home care costs. Alaska’s disability population is at risk and in addition the rapid increase of seniors, our state is predicted to experience one of the highest increases of people aged 65 and older with Alzheimer’s in the nation. The growing demand for in-home, long-term healthcare services is coupled with a decline in workforce numbers. Because of this, home care workers are predicted to be the fourth-most demanded profession on the state.

Currently, an estimated 85,000 Alaskans provide unpaid care to family members or friends, which has an estimated worth of \$1.2 billion per year.. Paying family caregivers, a living wage reduces the reliance on public assistance programs and helps them maintain their economic independence.

SB 106 would enable more Alaskans to maintain their independence and dignity and I ask that you support and pass this bill.

Sincerely Yours,

Art Delaune

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