

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

The Honorable Representative Mina  
State Capitol Room 420  
Juneau Ak, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106 and HB 127

Dear Senator Giessel and Representative Mina

My name is Sally Adams, I live in Kenai, and I'm writing in support of SB 106 and HB 127, which would permanently allow family caregivers who are legally responsible to be paid for their work. Before I was a paid caregiver I was an unpaid family caregiver. I took care of my dad, and then he passed away. Then I took care of my husband and he passed away. It didn't matter to me then whether I was paid or not because caring for our family is something we're supposed to do. It's what we sign up for. But when we sign up to do that as a family most of us don't expect to be in a place where we can't leave the house because it's not safe for our family to be alone. We don't sign up for washing each other's bodies as adults, or doing all the work of maintaining the family alone.

Being paid to provide care would have changed a lot for me. It's been a constant struggle to make ends meet and try to make sure my clients have everything they need. Back when I couldn't be paid, I was doing the same work I'm doing now- it wasn't like I could just leave when I wanted or when I needed, it wasn't like I could just leave for work and come back, and I had the same bills then I do now.

People can't afford to do this care for free. Without a change legally responsible individuals will go back to not being paid. There's no one coming to replace them or break them out so they can go take other jobs, and there are a lot of clients already who are being turned away from care because there aren't enough people to do it. I need surgery on my hand. I've been putting it off for 8 years, and now I have nerve damage. I'm terrified to go through with it because I know that when I don't show up to work the only person left to take care of my client is her 81 year old grandma who needs care herself. If I don't do the surgery I'll lose the ability to use my hand, and I won't be able to take care of my client, but my client might not get care if I take the time. We're in a rock and a hard place and we need all the help we can get.

Letting family members do the work- with training and oversight, frees up the rest of us to go help other clients who need it. We can't afford to lose them. Please support this bill.

Respectfully,

Sally Adams

Monday, March 27, 2023  
The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

The Honorable Representative Mina  
State Capitol Room 420  
Juneau Ak, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106 and HB 127

Dear Senator Giessel and Representative Mina,

My name is Debbie Mulholland and I live in Anchorage. I am writing in support of SB 106 and HB 127. I was a caregiver for the last decade but I'm now retired from the profession. Just before my retirement I lost a dear client. His family was one hundred percent there to make sure that he was well taken care of in his last years. In the end, he was able to die where he had lived since the 1950's. Families like this are the reason I continue to fight for family caregivers to be paid, giving their family the best care only they know how to provide.

Even though I am retired, I still have clients on my mind. I wonder how someone whose whole world revolves around taking care of a disabled child or partner, slipping into dementia can manage. Only they know their special needs, and if I may add, the communication that exists only with someone who knows you intimately is so much better. With all of this to carry, it is even more of a burden to also add the weight of trying to financially juggle the bills too. These family caregivers desperately need to be paid for their labors of love. The need for in-home care is only getting more dire as Alaska's population ages. More people want to stay in their homes as they age. Assisted living can be good, but it's not the same.

This is an issue that affects so many people in Alaska. I am in awe of anyone who has a parent that needs care right now. Handling the logistics of trying to find someone you can feel comfortable with to tend to the needs of a family member is so hard. I appreciate your support of those whose whole lives are dedicated to caring for their family members. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Debbie Mulholland

Monday, March 20, 2023

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106

Dear Senator Giessel,

My name is Maddy Morris, and I live in Soldotna, Alaska. I'm writing in support of SB 106. I've been a caregiver for the last nine years for my client, Nicole. She has a traumatic brain injury (TBI) due to a car accident she suffered during high school. Each morning I help Nicole get dressed. I assist her with undergarments, help brush her hair, and prepare for the day ahead. Then we go out into the world for day habilitation. She likes to go out into the community and does a different activity each day. We set goals together and sharpen her skills and methodologies to make sure she is progressing and growing and not just staying stagnant. I really care for Nicole and consider her to be family. I have been helping take care of her for the last nine years and have seen her grow. It is fulfilling work.

Before I became a caregiver I retired from my career as a tech engineer. I knew Nicole's grandmother and she asked me to help her care for her granddaughter. Ever since then I have been her caregiver. When I work with Nicole, she progresses. If I don't, she doesn't. I'm so glad that I can give her something that helps keep her life moving forward. They were going to put her in a home, and that would have been the end of her life. Being a caregiver has meant a lot to me because after her accident, Nicole only had a five percent chance of living, and because she got the in-home care she needed, she lived and is doing very well. Everything I have learned, I learned on the journey with Nicole.

The problem is, over the last few years, it's gotten harder and harder to find a good caregiver. Soldotna is a spread-out rural community. Low wages, the commitment to work every holiday with no time off, and the lack of benefits in agencies are big reasons that there is a caregiver shortage. It is scary, because if my client can't find a good caregiver, she might have to go unattended which is a dangerous situation for Nicole. (She's quite curious and likes to get into things). It's not good if she's on her own.

When there's no other caregiver to cover for me, my agency won't send any back up at all, even if I'm sick, I still have to work and risk Nicole either getting sick, or going without the care she needs. When Nicole caught Covid, I had to show up. There was no choice. I would have liked to be able to have a day off, I would have liked to have sick leave or vacation time, but I don't, even if I get burnt out.

I think making it easier for family members to become paid caregivers is important because we need all the caregivers we can get. Family members become caregivers and sometimes continue caregiving because it can be very fulfilling work. Sometimes family members must become caregivers full time and by doing that, they develop a lot of skills and on the job training in a family environment. This means a lot to me, and I appreciate you continuing to fight for us caregivers, because everyone will eventually need care. Thank you for continuing to take steps to make sure the care system gets fixed here in Alaska.

Sincerely,

Maddy Morris



Tuesday, March 21, 2023

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106

Dear Senator Giessel,

Hello, my name is Jennifer Williams and I live in Anchor Point, Alaska. I am writing in support of SB 106. I've been a caregiver for thirteen years. Currently, I care for a client who is dealing with Alzheimer's. A lot of the folks that I have taken care of over the years are Elders. They have taken care of us through the years. Being a PCA is my way of giving back. They have made many sacrifices through our lifetime, and I feel that as a family, it's our moral responsibility to assist them through sometimes difficult situations and health issues.

Over the last few years, it's harder and harder to find a good reliable caregiver for a lot of reasons. During covid, everyone started to rely on family members more often because caregivers got sick. I also think that Covid gave caregivers the chance to think and realize that we are worth more, that our families are worth more, and that we need a living wage.

When people can't find a good caregiver, the client goes without care. They don't get the proper doses of medication or groceries. If they go without care, it can be detrimental to their wellbeing. Clients can get malnourished and not get the proper care they need. Some caregivers like me who do this because we love it, feel obligated to stay longer or take on unpaid work just so clients don't go without.

We need to take care of each other. No one wants their loved ones to go without care that's essential for their health, especially the individuals who are isolated and live in rural areas. I also think that the prices of gas have a lot to do with the shortage. With me having to drive out to these rural areas, I don't get compensated for gas or wear and tear on my vehicle.

When there's no other caregiver to cover for me, I volunteer my own time to make sure my clients have their basic needs covered. Through the years I've taken care of up to six people at one time and was way over extended. Communication is key, because these clients don't have any other options, and they will just literally go without the care they need, they aren't getting the hours covered by their healthcare insurance, or there is no one else around to help them.

I think that making it easier for family members to become paid Caregivers could help with the shortage we are facing in Alaska. With Caregivers not getting the pay we need, we are going to keep experiencing a shortage of Caregivers at agencies. Families will need to take the responsibility and give up their jobs and career to stay at home for loved ones. It is crucial that they get paid to do so.

That is why I ask you to please pass this bill so we can make it easier for family members to become permanently paid caregivers. If families can get paid to take care of their loved ones, they can feel like they are productive. It would make sure that clients are getting the care they need. It could help with financial stability without families taking on all the burden of care plus other jobs. I thank you for taking steps to make this care system work better for everyone. It's urgently needed, and it makes a big difference.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Williams

**From:** [Laura Bonner](#)  
**To:** [Senate Health and Social Services](#)  
**Cc:** [Sen. James Kaufman](#); [Sen. Cathy Giessel](#)  
**Subject:** Support for SB106  
**Date:** Monday, April 03, 2023 12:52:52 PM

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Chair David Wilson  
Vice-Chair James Kaufman  
Senator Cathy Giessel  
Senator Loki Tobin  
Senator Forrest Dunbar

I fully support SB106 to amend Alaska's Medicaid plan and to ask for federal approval. It would help many families to care for their loved ones who struggle with dementia, complex medical needs for minor children or a disabled adult who can't function on their own. Trained direct care workers are difficult to find due to a shortage of them. The low pay is a contributing factor to the shortage. Passage of SB106 will ease some of the burden of worker shortage and be beneficial for the recipient of needed care.

Thank you Senator Giessel for introducing this bill and thank you to those who are co-sponsors.

Laura Bonner  
Senate District F  
Anchorage

Monday, March 27th, 2023

The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

The Honorable Representative Mina  
State Capitol Room 420  
Juneau Ak, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106 and HB 127

Dear Senator Giessel and Representative Mina,

My name is Veronica Page and I live in Anchorage. I am writing in support of SB 106 and HB 127. This bill will allow family members to be paid to provide care for their loved ones permanently. I'm asking you to support this bill as well.

My wedding dress is hanging in my garage unworn. One month before our wedding my fiance was in a devastating accident. He was expected to be in a permanent vegetative state- never to eat, to walk, to live the way we'd always planned. I never got to say my vows, but I have stuck by my partner every step of the way over the last 12 years as his sole care provider. By the healing grace of God he has made an incredible recovery. He can do most of the things doctors were sure he wouldn't ever be able to.

We never married because in the state of Alaska being married would have meant that I would not be able to be paid as a caregiver for my husband. The care was 24/7 around the clock- there was no way for me to work another job and frankly, he didn't want other people seeing him in that position. There aren't enough caregivers in Alaska and there are many people who don't have the training they need to be effective at work. Anything less than excellent care would have hindered his recovery. We couldn't take that chance, and we had to pay for housing somehow.

We are a Christian family and every day of the last 12 years I have been living in sin against my values and denied my dream. We could never take the chance, even in the last few years, that our marriage could cost us my sole income- cost us everything, and so we have done what we had to do to be well and keep the bills paid. Alaskans deserve choice. Many families, like mine, want to take care of each other and they're the best caregivers delivering care at the highest level. We deserve to make a living doing the same work that other caregivers do. We deserve to



be married, and we deserve to be paid.

Sincerely,  
Veronica Page

March 20, 2023  
The Honorable Senator Cathy Giessel  
State Capitol Room 427  
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB 106

Dear Senator Giessel,

Hi, I'm Sarah Krug and I live in Anchorage, Alaska. I am writing in support of SB 106. I am a care provider, it is my job and my life. I work as a Paraprofessional Educator, in a self-contained SPED classroom. I also work as a Direct Care Provider, under Appendix K, for my son who has an IDD waiver.

As a care provider I provide and document hands-on assistance while also supporting a sense of independence with very personal needs. I assist with tasks such as showering, toileting, teeth brushing, medication, tube feeding, range of motion exercises, position changes, specialized medical equipment and so much more. These supports help people with the basic and essential needs in their daily lives. Care provider jobs require a lot of hard work: physically, mentally and emotionally. These are low paid jobs, with high turnover rates. But, paid care providers are essential to the infrastructure of our society.

I have 3 children that I am raising on my own. Today I want to tell you about Zachary. Zachary is 17 years old and has Cerebral Palsy. He uses a power wheelchair to move and an ipad to communicate. He requires assistance with almost all his daily needs just to survive. My son requires an institutional level of care. But, with the help of care providers, he has the support he needs to thrive.

Before having a child with a disability I attended UAA for Social Work, but Zachary needed a lot of specialized direct care, more than childcare centers could provide. Lack of qualified care providers prevented me from obtaining a college degree and career and continue to limit my ability to work and support my family.

Zachary was on the waitlist for waiver services for 7 years. After getting a waiver we still struggled to find, train and retain care providers. Over the last 10 years, we have had some amazing care providers, and others who just didn't mesh with our family. Working in someone's home or having someone work in your home is a unique and intimate experience. Eventually every care provider we've ever had moved on, which created an environment of uncertainty, and a sense of abandonment for a child who didn't understand why. The revolving door of care providers was very stressful for my family, especially Zachary.

Covid created chaos and devastation, but it also challenged us to reevaluate how things have always been done. Finding different, yet successful, ways of doing things. There is a significant shortage of care providers available. This leaves people without essential care. And families are faced with an excessive burden that comes with caring for a person with a disability. There is no

easy or one size fits all solution, but Appendix K allowed family members the option to be paid for time they work providing care directly for disabled family members. Allowing family members to be paid care providers reduces overall costs of care and keeps people out of expensive institutions and in their homes and communities. We need consistent and quality care providers, and often that is a family member. The stability and quality care that I am able to provide for Zachary has been incredible for his development and goals.

I work and live as a care provider. I am a single mom, I work two full-time jobs and I still struggle to support my family. Being able to be paid for some of the hours that I provide care for my son with Cerebral Palsy has made my family more self-sufficient, reduced our need for financial assistance, and overall been a very positive experience. Disabilities are the only minority group that any of us can become part of at any time. Anyone who might experience: an accident, illness, genetic difference or the effects of aging. These are our children, parents, family, friends, neighbors, coworkers. They are a part of our community. These people matter. We all have a personal stake in the disability community.

Thank you for taking the steps to make Alaska's care system work better for everyone. These policy changes will make a big difference in our community and in the lives of Alaskan's with disabilities. Please support policies that continue to allow people to be paid care providers for family members with disabilities. If you want to know more or have questions, I am happy to continue this conversation. You can reach me via phone call, text or mail.

Thank you for your time,

Sarah Krug  
email: [alaskakrugfamily@gmail.com](mailto:alaskakrugfamily@gmail.com)  
phone: (907) 727-6712  
2400 W 79th ave Anchorage AK 99502

**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

[REDACTED]  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

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