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April 13, 2024

Sen Scott Kawasaki
Alaska Legislature
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Support for Senior Benefits Program Reauthorization

Dear Senator Kawasaki:

Thank you for introducing legislation to reauthorize the Alaska Senior Benefits Program. Without passage of this legislation, the Senior Benefits Program will end in June, 2024. While most older Alaskans are self-supporting, some need financial assistance to remain independent. This program provides foundational support to help low-income elders remain in their homes and communities.

The Senior Benefits Program has a proven track record of providing support for older people whose income is simply not adequate to pay for their total housing, food, heat, and health care costs. Alaska's Senior Benefits Program pays cash assistance tied to the Alaska Federal Poverty Guidelines to low-income 65+ Alaskans who are not in Pioneer Homes or other institutional care. Cash payments for the past five years have been \$76, \$175, or \$250 each month depending on income which is especially critical for the more than 10% of Alaskan elders who fall at or near the federal poverty line. In 2022, the program served 9,000 seniors at an average of 75 years old with the oldest being 104.

AARP Alaska supports the reauthorization for the Senior Benefits Program to protect the financial security and independence of low-income older Alaskans. On behalf of the fastest growing senior population in the nation and our 77,000 AARP Alaska members, and for the benefit of all Alaskans, we thank you for your leadership on this important issue for older Alaskans.

Respectfully, Marge Stoneking
Advocacy Director, AARP Alaska

