

**HB**

**263**

<TARGET><BILL>HB 263</BILL><SUBJECT>HB  
263</SUBJECT><COMM>SHSS28</COMM></TARGET>

# SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 2/28/14

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED  
IN TO OFFICE: 3/21/14

Health and Social Services Committee considered CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 263(HSS)

HB 263-EXTEND SENIOR BENEFITS PAYMENT PROGRAM

"An Act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program."

and recommends:

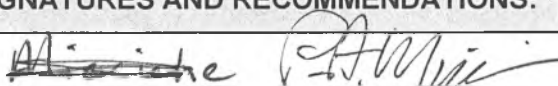
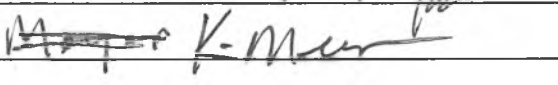
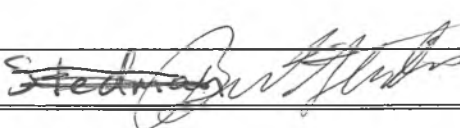
- be replaced with SCS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)  Same Title  Technical Title Change  
 New Title/SCR No. \_\_\_\_\_
- adopt previous SCS \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_\_)  Same Title  Technical Title Change  
 New Title/SCR No. \_\_\_\_\_
- attached amendment(s)
- adopt \_\_\_\_\_ Letter of Intent
- further referral to \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

Dept Abbr.	
ADM	LWF
CED	LAW
COR	LEG
CRT	MVA
EED	DNR
DEC	DPS
DFG	REV
GOV	DOT
DHS	UA

NEW FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #

PREVIOUS FISCAL NOTE(S)				
Dept.	Fiscal	Indet.	Zero	FN #
DHS	✓			1

APPROPRIATION - no fiscal note

SIGNATURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS:	PRINTED LAST NAME	DO PASS	DO NOT PASS	NO REC	AMEND
	Micciche	✓			
	Meyer	✓			
CHAIR: 	Stedman	✓			

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2014 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 263  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB263-DHSS-SBPP-02-03-14  
Title: EXTEND SENIOR BENEFITS PAYMENT PROGRAM  
Sponsor: HAWKER  
Requester: House HSS Committee

Department: Department of Health and Social Services  
Appropriation: Public Assistance  
Allocation: Senior Benefits Payment Program  
OMB Component Number: 2897

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2015 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2015 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personal Services		535.3	535.3	535.3	535.3	535.3	535.3	535.3
Travel		9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7	9.7
Services		169.7	169.7	169.7	169.7	169.7	169.7	169.7
Commodities		43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5	43.5
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits		22,332.3	24,260.5	24,942.2	25,644.2	26,367.3	27,112.2	
Miscellaneous								
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>23,090.5</b>	<b>25,018.7</b>	<b>25,700.4</b>	<b>26,402.4</b>	<b>27,125.5</b>	<b>27,870.4</b>	

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

1004 Gen Fund		23,090.5	25,018.7	25,700.4	26,402.4	27,125.5	27,870.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>23,090.5</b>	<b>25,018.7</b>	<b>25,700.4</b>	<b>26,402.4</b>	<b>27,125.5</b>	<b>27,870.4</b>

**Positions**

Full-time		6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues							

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)  
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2015) cost: 0.0 (separate capital appropriation required)  
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 06/30/15

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:**

Not applicable, initial version.

Prepared By: Ron Kreher, Director  
Division: Public Assistance  
Approved By: Sarah Woods, Deputy Director  
Agency: Finance & Management Services

Phone: (907)465-5847  
Date: 02/03/2014 08:00 AM  
Date: 02/03/14

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB263

**Analysis**

This program supports the DHSS Priority 1: Health and Wellness across the lifespan; Core Service 1.2: Provide quality of life in a safe living environment for Alaskans by providing on-going assistance to low-income seniors so they can remain independent in their communities.

The regulation change required is the repeal and reenactment of AAC 47.545. This section currently establishes June 30, 2015 as the end date for applicability of the Senior Benefits Payment Program regulations. The repeal and reenactment of this particular section, extending applicability to June 30, 2021, would need to occur prior to June 30, 2015.

**Analysis:**

The Senior Benefits Payment Program helps low income seniors who are age 65 or older remain independent in the community by providing a monthly income supplement to help meet their basic needs, such as food and housing. Currently the program is set to expire on June 30, 2015. This legislation continues the program through June 30, 2021. As of December 2013, the current program enrollment was 10,954. The number and percent of seniors at each payment level was:

\* \$250 - 1,288 (11.8%)

\* \$175 - 4,594 (41.9%)

\* \$125 - 5,072 (46.3%)

**Assumptions:**

- Current staffing levels for the program will be maintained.
- Annual expenditures for Personal Services, Travel, Contractual, and Supplies will remain constant for FY 2015 through FY 2021.
- Annual grant expenditures are expected to increase in response to a projected caseload growth of 2.8% annually in the out years.



# REPRESENTATIVE MIKE HAWKER

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE ♦ DISTRICT 27

Anchorage ♦ Glen Alps ♦ Rainbow ♦ Indian ♦ Bird ♦ Girdwood

## Senior Benefits Extension Sponsor Statement

**Short Title: "An Act extending senior benefits."**

HB 263 would extend the Alaska Senior Benefits Program to June 30, 2021. If the program is not extended, it will sunset on June 30, 2015.

The Senior Benefits Program, established on August 1, 2007, provides monthly cash assistance to state residents age 65 years or older and have low to moderate income level.

Specifically, the program pays:

Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit (Effective 3/1/2014)			
Individual	\$10,935	\$14,580	\$25,515
Married Couple	\$14,745	\$19,660	\$34,405
Monthly Payment	<b>\$250</b>	<b>\$175</b>	<b>\$125</b>

Approximately 11,000 of Alaska's seniors will be served by the Senior Benefits Program in FY2014.

SESSION: State Capitol Room 502, Juneau, Alaska 99801 ♦ 465-4949 ♦ FAX: 465-4979

INTERIM: 716 W. 4th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99501 ♦ 269-0244 ♦ FAX: 269-0248

Rep.Mike.Hawker@akleg.gov ♦ www.housemajority.org/hawker



# REPRESENTATIVE MIKE HAWKER

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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE • DISTRICT 27

Anchorage • Glen Alps • Rainbow • Indian • Bird • Girdwood

## Changes to HB 263 HHSS

The bill was amended to tighten title of the bill from:

“ An act extending senior benefits” TO

“An act extending the Alaska senior benefits payment program

SESSION: State Capitol Room 502, Juneau, Alaska 99801 • 465-4949 • FAX: 465-4979

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Rep.Mike.Hawker@akleg.gov • [www.housemajority.org/hawker](http://www.housemajority.org/hawker)

# Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM



1. Does the percentage increase of recipients parallel the age demographics across the state?
2. How have the percentages changed within the cohorts?

*Senior Benefits Recipients, December 2013*

Age Group	Population		Senior Benefit Recipients		Percent of population in age group receiving Senior Benefits
	#	%	#	%	
65-69	28,052	41%	3,225	29%	11%
70-74	16,915	25%	2,906	27%	17%
75-79	10,390	15%	2,123	19%	20%
80-84	6,761	10%	1,490	14%	22%
85+	5,645	8%	1,210	11%	21%
Total 65+	67,763	100%	10,954	100%	16%

*Senior Benefits Recipients, December 2008*

Age Group	Population		Senior Benefit Recipients		Percent of population in age group receiving Senior Benefits
	#	%	#	%	
65-69	18,958	39%	2,574	28%	14%
70-74	11,889	24%	2,325	25%	20%
75-79	8,533	17%	1,973	21%	23%
80-84	5,546	11%	1,372	15%	25%
85+	4,300	9%	1,043	11%	24%
Total 65+	49,226	100%	9,287	100%	19%

\*\*Population estimates are from Department Of Labor Research & Analysis and are limited

**3. Is the 2.8% increase the average since 2007 in order to get a projected cost?**

*The division uses a combination of caseload growth and an analysis of the payment category breakdown to generate projections in the Senior Benefits Payment Program. Population statistics from the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Alaska Population by Age and Sex baseline is also used to inform projections.*

*Due to a projected increase in the aging population in the 60 and older category, we are anticipating an overall increase in caseload growth of 20% over the next five years. This growth, coupled with changes in the percent of seniors eligible in each payment level within the program, may result in even larger growth to program expenditures.*

*SFY2014 program payment levels reflect 11.8% of eligible seniors are receiving payment at the highest payment level in the program while 41.9% are receiving payment at the middle payment level and 46.3% are receiving benefits at the lowest level. Since SFY2012, there has been an overall increase of 7% in the number of eligible seniors who receive payment at the mid payment level and a 2% increase in the number who receive payment at the highest level.*

# Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM



## Fact Sheet January 31, 2014

The Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program was established on August 1, 2007 and is currently set to end on June 30, 2015. It pays cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Cash payments are \$125, \$175, or \$250 each month depending on income.

### Recipients

- There were 10,954 Senior Benefits recipients as of December 2013.
  - ✓ Number and percent of seniors at each payment level in December 2013.
  - ✓ \$250 – 1,288 (11.8%)
  - ✓ \$175 – 4,594 (41.9%)
  - ✓ \$125 – 5,072 (46.3%)
- Average age of recipients is 75. The maximum age is 103.

### Program Expenditures

- | FY 2007   | FY 2008    | FY 2009    | FY 2010    | FY 2011    | FY 2012    | FY 2013    |
|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| \$9,777.3 | \$15,220.0 | \$18,232.8 | \$19,147.9 | \$20,609.5 | \$20,893.7 | \$21,128.6 |
- Projected program expenditures for FY 2014 are \$23.3 million. Projected expenditures for FY 2015 are \$23.6 million.

### Eligibility and Payment

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.).

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit (Effective 3/1/2014)		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$125 monthly payment
Individual	\$10,935 (\$912 per month)	\$14,580 (\$1,215 per month)	\$25,515 (\$2,127 per month)
Married Couple	\$14,745 (\$1,229 per month)	\$19,660 (\$1,639 per month)	\$34,405 (\$2,868 per month)

- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$125 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively.
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted for eligibility.

- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
  - ✓ Prison or jail,
  - ✓ Nursing home,
  - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home, or
  - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Geographic Distribution by Census Area, December 2013

Census Area	Number of Recipients	Census Area	Number of Recipients
ALEUTIANS EAST	26	MAT-SU	1,416
ALEUTIANS WEST	33	NOME	243
ANCHORAGE	4,001	NORTH SLOPE	40
BETHEL	546	NW ARCTIC	153
BRISTOL BAY	11	PETERSBURG	85
DENALI	15	PRINCE OF WALES	210
DILLINGHAM	147	SE FAIRBANKS	193
FAIRBANKS N STAR	825	SITKA	110
HAINES	85	SKAGWAY	4
HOONAH-ANGOON	84	VALDEZ/CORDOVA	160
JUNEAU	360	WADE HAMPTON	235
KENAI	1,063	WRANGELL	86
KETCHIKAN GATEWAY	273	YAKUTAT	17
KODIAK	230	YUKON KOYUKUK	258
LAKE AND PENINSULA	44	Grand Total	10,954

<b>Evolution of the Senior Benefits Program</b>	
1972 - 2003	<b>Alaska Longevity Bonus Program.</b> The Alaska Longevity Bonus Program was established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible upon reaching the age of 65. \$250/month was issued to seniors who applied before 1994, \$200 to those applying in 1994, \$150 to those applying in 1995, and \$100 to those applying in 1996. Payments were not available to seniors who applied after 1996. The program was subsequently defunded in 2003, and final benefits were issued for the month of August 2003.
2003 - 2004	<b>Senior Assistance Program.</b> Beginning September 2003, the Governor's office used its executive authority to establish the needs-based Senior Assistance program in response to the needs of low-income Alaskans aged 65 and older who were financially impacted by the elimination of the Alaska Longevity Bonus. Payments were limited to \$120/month. The program ended March 2004.
2004 - 2007	<b>SeniorCare Program.</b> Beginning April 2004, the SeniorCare Program was established to replace the former Senior Assistance Program. The new program was expanded to include a prescription drug benefit. Low-income seniors that passed the program's income and resource limits could choose to receive either a \$120/month payment or a prescription drug benefit. The program ended July 2007.
2007 - Present	<b>Senior Benefits Program.</b> Beginning August 2007, the Senior Benefits Program was established to replace the SeniorCare Program. The program provides three payment levels that are based on the senior's gross annual income. Income limits are tied to the Federal Poverty Guidelines for Alaska and change each year as the poverty level changes. There is no asset test. The program is currently set to expire on June 30, 2015.



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of  
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

P.O. Box 110693  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0693  
Main: 907.465.3250  
Fax: 907.465.1398

February 3, 2014

Representative Mike Hawker  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 502  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 263

Dear Representative Hawker:

Since 2007, the Senior Benefits program is an invaluable safety-net program for modest-income older Alaskans who live on small fixed incomes to assist them to live with dignity and independence in their home communities. Because this program provides a critical financial safety net for seniors, the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) enthusiastically supports the extension of the sunset date.

The risk of living in poverty in later life increases with age and varies by race, gender, marital status and age. The risk of poverty is far greater for seniors who are older than 75 years, persons living alone, as well as for widowed women and those of minority status. These older Alaskans have little or no cushion to meet any emergency needs, let alone afford basic life necessities.

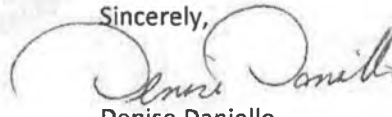
The Senior Benefits program provides tiered monthly payments to older Alaskans, up to 175% federal poverty level. While these monthly payments are not large amounts, they make a difference in whether or not an older person is able to afford food, rent, fuel, medication, and other necessities. This cash benefit helps low-income seniors to live with dignity and independence within their communities which has a positive impact on senior health and well-being.

The Alaska Commission on Aging strongly recommends that the 2014 Legislature vote to extend the sunset date for the Senior Benefits program, enabling the program to continue to support those seniors most vulnerable to economic stresses. We applaud your leadership, Representative Hawker, for initiating this program and continued support for its sunset extensions. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or [denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov)) should you require additional information. Thank you so much for your support of this important program for older Alaskans.

Sincerely,

  
Mary E. Shieles  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

  
Denise Daniello  
ACoA Executive Director

# The TRUST

The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

February 16, 2014

Representative Mike Hawker  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 502  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: HB 263 Letter of support

Dear Representative Hawker,

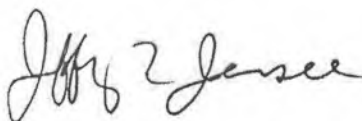
The Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority is pleased to write a letter in support of HB 263, an Act extending the Alaska Senior Benefit payment program through the year 2021. On behalf of our beneficiaries who often times represent the lowest of income Alaskans and those residing in families who have disabling conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease, we thank you for the work to extend this important program that is set to end in June of this year.

In Alaska, it is estimated that approximately 5,000 people currently have Alzheimer's disease or Related Dementia conditions and are relying on family members, our social services safety net or the Pioneer Homes for assistance in negotiating the challenges of this disease. Presently, there are about 75,000 Alaskan aged 65 years and above, an age group that is increasingly likely to develop a disabling condition such as Alzheimer's disease. In ten years, this number will increase sharply and in twenty years estimates indicate there will be approximately double that number at 150,000. Assisting families in maintaining a loved one's care in the home or in the community as close to home as possible has been demonstrated as a way to reduce overall state costs time and again.

Many communities struggle with high costs of housing, fuel and basic necessities. The median rent for Anchorage is \$988.00 for a one bedroom apartment. Other communities, particularly in rural areas have much higher costs for housing and the supportive services and necessities that accompany conditions such as Alzheimer's disease.

We support this bill as a way to enable families to continue to care for loved ones at home and to assist Alaskan elders in maintaining economic stability through these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Jeff Jessee, CEO





**AARP Alaska**  
3601 C Street  
Suite 1420  
Anchorage, AK 99503

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F 907-341-2270  
[www.aarp.org/ak](http://www.aarp.org/ak)

February 3, 2014

The Honorable Mike Hawker  
State Capitol, Room 502  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: HB 263 - Extend Senior Benefits Payment Program

Dear Representative Hawker,

On behalf of the over 90,000 members of AARP Alaska, we offer support without reservation for HB 263, which extends the very important Senior Benefits Program until 2021. Without passage of HB 263, the Senior Benefits Program will end in June of this year.

We know the Governor and the Legislature will never have enough money to do all that they would like to do to help older Alaskans remain here after retirement. Recognizing that public monies will always be limited, AARP's public policy position is that state funds should always go to those most in need, whether financial need or health needs. The Senior Benefits program now has a proven track record of providing support for older people whose income (defined by the eligibility criteria) is simply not adequate to pay for their total housing, food, heat, and health care costs. In fact, the older people most likely to benefit from an extension include:

- Older women: Many of the people who are supported with Senior Benefits payments are women who were lower income at 64 and, finally at 65, they are eligible for some assistance from the state. Very often these women did have assets and savings but used them to pay for the health care costs of a now deceased spouse.
- Alaskans who simply were not paid that much when they were working. Many lower paid workers had more than one job, but with Alaska's higher cost of living, simply were not able to accumulate much and are more likely to be receiving minimal Social Security benefits and have no private pension coverage.
- Rural Alaskans, especially those who live subsistence lifestyles. These individuals are least likely to have cash income. If they receive Social Security, their benefits are often very low. The loss of the Senior Benefits Program would hurt many older Alaskans living in our remote villages.
- The oldest of our citizens. Many more people are now living into their 80's and 90's, and as they age they are more likely to find themselves on tighter budgets. No pension or retirement system adequately compensates for inflation, particularly in health care costs. Our oldest citizens are the ones most likely to spend increasing amounts of their retirement budgets on health and other bare necessities.

We are grateful to you, Rep. Hawker, for your sponsorship of HB 263, and the respect for Alaska's seniors that you demonstrate. We offer our best wishes for extension of this important program. Please contact me if you have any questions about AARP's support.

Respectfully,

Ken Helander  
Advocacy Director  
762-3314  
[khelander@aarp.org](mailto:khelander@aarp.org)

# AGENET

## Alaska Geriatric Exchange Network

An Association of Advocates and Service Providers for Older Alaskans

February 3, 2014

Representative Mike Hawker  
State Capitol Room 502  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Hawker:

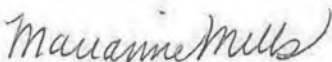
Members of the Alaska Geriatric Exchange Network (AGENET) are experienced senior service providers from across Alaska. On the following page is a list of our members. As professionals who are particularly familiar with challenges facing older Alaskans, we would like to offer our support for House Bill 263 to extend the Alaska Senior Benefits Program to June 30, 2021.

Approximately 11,000 older Alaskans with low to moderate incomes currently depend on this program to supplement their fixed incomes. They use the money to buy a wide range of local goods and services. Seniors' spending is a stable, year-round industry that has an economic multiplier impact resulting in job creation and income generation that expands the size of the Alaska's economy.

In addition to being a wise economic investment, the Senior Benefits Program helps older Alaskans maintain their health, safety and independent living. They use the monthly cash assistance to buy necessities such as food, fuel, assistive devices (including glasses and hearing aids), and medical care. The small monthly amount an eligible senior receives can make a meaningful difference toward helping them afford the basic necessities of life.

The Senior Benefits Program was established in 2007 and will end on June 30, 2015 unless it is extended. Thank you, Representative Hawker, for sponsoring this bill which extends the sunset date of this important program. Feel free to contact me at (907) 463-6154 or [Marianne.mills@ccsiuneau.org](mailto:Marianne.mills@ccsiuneau.org) for further information.

Sincerely,



Marianne Mills, President

Mailing Address: c/o President Marianne Mills, SESS, 419 Sixth Street, Juneau, Alaska 99801

The members of AGENET include:

Senior Citizens of Kodiak  
Anchorage Senior Center  
Center for Community  
Kenai Senior Services  
Fairbanks Resource Agency  
Older Alaskans Program-TSA  
Independent Living Center  
Soldotna Area Senior Citizens  
Alaska Consumer Direct  
Palmer Senior Citizens Center  
Qutekcak Native Tribe  
Southeast Alaska Independent Living  
Valdez Senior Citizens, Inc.  
Native Village of Unalakleet  
Hearts and Hands, Inc.  
State Independent Living Council  
Access Alaska  
Ninilchik Senior Citizens  
ResCare  
Hospice of Anchorage  
Eddy Hoffman Senior Center

Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska  
Tanana Chiefs Conference  
Southeast Senior Services  
Homer Senior Citizens, Inc.  
Serendipity Adult Day Center  
Seward Seniors, Inc.  
Seaview Community Services  
Rendezvous Senior Day Services  
Immediate Care, Inc.  
Alaska Mobility Coalition  
AHFC Senior Housing Office  
Lisa Cauble (TTC)  
Ken Helander (AARP)  
Frontier Community Services  
MidValley Seniors, Inc.  
Nenana Tortella Council on Aging  
Sandra Heffern (EHD Enterprises)  
Kay Branch (ANTHC)  
Wasilla Area Seniors  
Sterling Area Senior Citizens



IT IS IN THE SHELTER  
OF EACH OTHER THAT  
THE PEOPLE LIVE.

*Irish Proverb*

February 3, 2014  
The Honorable Mike Hawker  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Alaska Capitol, Room 502  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
RE: HB 16 (Hawker) – Support

Dear Representative Hawker:

Community Connections is pleased to express our support for HB 263 which will extend the Senior Benefits Program for another four years. Community Connections serves the senior population on Prince of Wales, Metlakatla and Ketchikan. Our referral services identify hunger, or food insecurity, as a growing problem among the senior population in these areas.

The Hunger in America 2010 study found 42% of adult pantry and soup kitchen clients in Alaska were 50 and older. Of those pantry visitors 65 and older, 57.8% told us they experienced low or very low food security; they worry about or don't know if they will have enough food.

The study also found, of all pantry clients in Alaska:

- 43% had to choose between buying food and paying for utilities
- 45% had to choose between buying food and paying for rent or mortgage
- 35% had to choose between buying food and medicine

Among households with 1 senior member age 65 or older, 21.8% participate in a home delivered meal program. Agencies who deliver home meals have reported a 20% increase in requests for services. According to data from the Alaska Department of Public Assistance, food stamp recipients age 60 and over increased by 22% in 2009. The need is clear; our low-income seniors need help paying for basic needs.

We want all Alaskans to be hunger free, food secure. There is no question the Senior Benefits Program has helped Alaskan seniors put food on their tables, and will continue to do so with continued funding. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and wish to express our sincere thanks to you for helping Alaska Seniors live full and productive lives. We are also thankful to Representatives Millet, Lynn, Gara and Tuck for signing up to co-sponsor HB 263.

Thank you for all that you do for Alaska.

Sincerely,

Patricia Gardner  
SDS Director  
Community Connections  
907-225-7825

721 Stedman St.  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
Tel: (907) 225-7825  
Fax: (907) 225-1541

P.O. Box 420  
Craig, Alaska 99921  
Tel: (907) 826-3891  
Fax: (907) 826-3892

ALASKA



FOOD COALITION

January 31, 2014

The Honorable Mike Hawker  
Member of the House of Representatives  
Alaska Capitol, Room 502  
Juneau, AK 99801-1182  
RE: HB 263 (Hawker) – Support

Dear Representative Hawker:

The Alaska Food Coalition is pleased to express our support for HB 263, which will extend the Senior Benefits Program. At least 1/3 of the Alaska Food Coalition membership serves the senior population. Our members identify hunger, or food insecurity, as a growing problem among the senior population in Alaska. The Hunger in America 2010 study found 42% of adult pantry and soup kitchen clients in Alaska were 50 and older. Of those pantry visitors 65 and older, 57.8% told us they experienced low or very low food security; they worry about or don't know if they will have enough food.

Many agencies who deliver home meals have reported a substantial increase in requests for services. For example, the Juneau Senior Center has seen a 20% increase over last year, and also reports that many seniors they work with indicate that they are running out of food before the end of the month. Similarly, the Valdez Food Bank has more than doubled the number of weekly deliveries to seniors. The need is clear; our low-income seniors need help paying for basic needs.

There is no question the Senior Benefits Program has helped Alaskan seniors put food on their tables, and will continue to do so with the requested funding. Paul Watson, an Alaska Food Coalition employee who conducts outreach for the Senior Benefits Program explains: "It's one of the most appreciated benefits I've ever worked with." We appreciate your leadership on this issue and wish to express our sincere thanks to you for helping Alaskan seniors live full and productive lives.

Sincerely,

Cara Durr  
Manager, Alaska Food Coalition