

HB

236

<TARGET><BILL>HB 236</BILL><SUBJECT>HB
236</SUBJECT><COMM>HHSS30</COMM></TARGET>



Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 1 Fairbanks

House Bill 236 Sponsor Statement

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

House Bill 236 would extend the Senior Benefits Program sunset clause to 2022, ensuring another four years of support for low income seniors across Alaska. Without action, the program would end in 2018.

The Senior Benefits Program protects low-income seniors by providing them with modest cash assistance to pay for expenses like food, heating, electricity, transportation and prescription medication.

The program was established in 2007 and currently provides assistance to nearly 12,000 Alaskans ages 65 and older with incomes at 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level. Assistance ranges from \$47 to \$250 a month for eligible seniors depending on income and the size of the appropriation from the Alaska State Legislature. The Senior Benefits Program is a successor to the Longevity Bonus, which was created in 1972.

This important program protects seniors who have spent a lifetime building this state. It lends a small hand to low-income seniors who need assistance to help make ends meet. Terminating this program would put thousands of seniors at risk for losing means to buy essential items necessary for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

I respectfully request your support.

April 20, 2017

Rep. Scott Kawasaki
State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

RE: HB 236 - Extend Senior Benefits Payment Program

Dear Representative Kawasaki,

On behalf of the over 85,000 members of AARP Alaska, we offer support without reservation for HB 236, which extends the very important Senior Benefits Program until 2022. Without passage of HB 236, the Senior Benefits Program will end in June, 2018.

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. Kawasaki, for your sponsorship of HB 236, 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



Marie Darlin, Coordinator
AARP Capitol City Task Force



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

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

April 19, 2017

Representative Scott Kawasaki
Alaska State Capitol, Room 502
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Regarding: Support for HB 236, Extending the Alaska Senior Benefits Program

Dear Representative Kawasaki:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer its support for HB 236 authored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Spohnholz, Fansler, and Tuck. Since 2007, the Alaska Senior Benefits Program has provided an invaluable resource for modest-income older Alaskans who live on small fixed incomes to afford basic life necessities. In the last statewide senior survey conducted by ACoA in 2015, senior participants identified financial security as the #2 most pressing issue confronting seniors behind access to health care services. Because Senior Benefits provides a critical financial safety net for seniors, the Commission supports the extension of the sunset date proposed.

The risk of living in poverty increases in later life and varies by race, gender, marital status and age. The risk of poverty is far greater for seniors who are 75 years and older, as well as for persons living alone, widowed women, and those of minority status. According to the Division of Public Assistance (2016), the average age of recipients is 75 and the maximum age is 104. Typically, seniors who receive Senior Benefits are older and often have little or no cushion to meet emergency needs, let alone to afford basic life necessities.

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

The Commission on Aging recommends passage of this legislation to extend the sunset date for the Senior Benefits Program. We thank you for your leadership, Representative Kawasaki, of HB 263 that will allow the program to continue to protect those seniors most vulnerable to economic stresses. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of David A. Blacketer in blue ink.

David A. Blacketer
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Denise Daniello in blue ink.

Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director

Cc: Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Zach Fansler

Representative Chris Tuck

April 20, 2017

To whom it may concern:

It has been brought to my attention the Senior Benefits Program is scheduled to sunset in July 2018 without legislative action. As you know this program was started for seniors over the age of 65 that are at the poverty level according to the Alaska Federal Poverty Guidelines.

My mother lives on a fixed income and has utilized this program for the past several years. She lives very meekly and uses this benefit to help pay for her groceries and other extra expenses. Living in Alaska we all know about increased cost of living i.e. groceries, gas, electric..... I could go on and on but I'm sure you get my point.

I currently work for a home health and hospice agency and know first-hand about the many struggles that seniors endure every day. Cutting this program would only make their situation worse. I ask that you please help to keep this very valuable program going as it is a great help to my mother and many other seniors living on a fixed income.

Sincerely,



Donna Arneson



Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM

Information & Fact Sheet
Updated June 30, 2016

Overview

The Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program pays monthly cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Payment levels depend on available state funding and how many people apply and qualify for the program. If the state budget cannot support the original amounts of \$125, \$175 and \$250, regulations allow for changes to be made for all eligible program participants. Cuts come from the highest income tier first, then the second, then the third.

The monthly payment for the highest income level was reduced to \$47 from \$125 on March 1, 2016 due to the state's limited budget for state fiscal year 2016.* The budget for state fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017) allows full monthly payments of \$175 and \$250 to recipients with the lowest income. Those income payment levels will continue through the end of this fiscal year. Funding reductions in this program now must be applied to individuals in the highest income bracket. They will receive \$47 for July because the budget was not finalized in time to make changes for July benefits. Beginning August 1, 2016, individuals in that highest income bracket will receive \$76 per month based on available funding at that income bracket.

** Due to a technical difficulty changing the benefit amount for the highest income tier, some seniors who were due to receive \$47 per month in April received \$125. To compensate, those that received the incorrect amount received \$8 per month in May and June.*

Eligibility and Payment

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.).
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted.
- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$76 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively.
- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
 - ✓ Prison or jail
 - ✓ A nursing home
 - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home
 - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 8/1/2016 *Benefit change effective August 1, 2016 due to final state budget		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	*\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,130 (\$928 per month)	\$14,840 (\$1,237 per month)	\$25,970 (\$2,165 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,015 (\$1,252 per month)	\$20,020 (\$1,669 per month)	\$35,035 (\$2,920 per month)

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 4/1/2016		
	The income limit changed April 1, 2016 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$47 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,130 (\$928 per month)	\$14,840 (\$1,237 per month)	\$25,970 (\$2,165 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,015 (\$1,252 per month)	\$20,020 (\$1,669 per month)	\$35,035 (\$2,920 per month)

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 3/1/2016		
	*Benefit change effective March 1, 2016 due to budget shortfall, caseload increase		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	*\$47 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,040 (\$920 per month)	\$14,720 (\$1,227 per month)	\$25,760 (\$2,146 per month)
Married Couple	\$14,940 (\$1,245 per month)	\$19,920 (\$1,660 per month)	\$34,860 (\$2,905 per month)

Senior Benefits recipients as of April 2016

- 11,855 recipients. Number and percent of seniors at each payment level:
 - ✓ \$250 – 1,647 (13.9%)
 - ✓ \$175 – 4,890 (41.2%)
 - ✓ \$47 - 5,318 (44.9%)
- Average age of recipients is 75. The maximum age is 104.
- The number of Senior Benefits cases is increasing. All figures are for December:
 - ✓ 2015 – 11,746
 - ✓ 2014 – 11,222
 - ✓ 2013 – 10,954
 - ✓ 2012 – 10,789
 - ✓ 2011 – 10,576

Recipients statewide as of May 2016:

Census Area	Number of Recipients	Census Area	Number of Recipients
ALEUTIANS EAST	32	MAT-SU	1,524
ALEUTIANS WEST	33	NOME	250
ANCHORAGE	4,231	NORTH SLOPE	38
BETHEL	564	NW ARCTIC	191
BRISTOL BAY	10	PETERSBURG	86
DENALI	14	PRINCE OF WALES	222
DILLINGHAM	129	SE FAIRBANKS	200
FAIRBANKS N STAR	870	SITKA	115
HAINES	88	SKAGWAY	8
HOONAH-ANGOON	89	VALDEZ/CORDOVA	175

JUNEAU	346	WADE HAMPTON	244
KENAI	1,151	WRANGELL	92
KETCHIKAN GATEWAY	284	YAKUTAT	16
KODIAK	224	YUKON KOYUKUK	270
LAKE AND PENINSULA	44	Grand Total	11,544

History of the Senior Benefits Program	
1972 - 2003	Alaska Longevity Bonus Program. Established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible at age 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	Senior Assistance Program. 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	SeniorCare Program. 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	<p>Senior Benefits Program. Established to replace the SeniorCare Program. Began August 2007; up for reauthorization in June 2018. Provides three payment levels 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.</p> <p>Regulation change finalized January 2016 described how benefits would be reduced by appropriation shortfall. Due to caseload increase, the highest income level that normally receives a \$125 benefit had the benefit reduced to \$47 effective March 1, 2016.</p> <p>The budget for state fiscal year 2017 allows monthly payment of \$76 to recipients in the highest income level.</p>



Senior BENEFITS PROGRAM

Information & Fact Sheet
Updated August 25, 2017

Overview

The Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program pays monthly cash benefits to Alaskans who are age 65 or older and have low to moderate income. Payment levels depend on available state funding and how many people apply and qualify for the program. If the state budget cannot support the original amounts of \$125, \$175 and \$250, regulations allow for changes to be made for all eligible program participants. Cuts come from the highest income tier first, then the second, then the third.

The monthly payment for the highest income level was reduced to \$47 from \$125 on March 1, 2016 due to the state's limited budget for state fiscal year 2016.* The budget for state fiscal year 2017 (July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017) allowed full monthly payments of \$175 and \$250 to recipients with the lowest income. Those income payment levels continued through the end of that fiscal year. Funding reductions in this program must be applied to individuals in the highest income bracket. They received \$47 for July because the budget was not finalized in time to make changes for July benefits. Beginning August 1, 2016, individuals in that highest income bracket received \$76 per month based on available funding at that income bracket. These income payment levels continued for state fiscal year 2018 (July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018).

** Due to a technical difficulty changing the benefit amount for the highest income tier, some seniors who were due to receive \$47 per month in April received \$125. To compensate, those that received the incorrect amount received \$8 per month in May and June.*

Eligibility and Payment

- Eligibility and payment amount is based on gross annual income (before any deductions are taken for taxes, Medicare premiums, etc.).
- Assets, such as savings, are not counted.
- Income limits may change yearly along with Alaska's federal poverty level. The \$250, \$175, and \$76 monthly payments correspond to 75 percent, 100 percent, and 175 percent of the federal poverty level for Alaska, respectively.
- Payments are not available to seniors living in the following institutions:
 - ✓ Prison or jail
 - ✓ A nursing home
 - ✓ Alaska Pioneers' Home or Alaska Veterans' Home
 - ✓ Public or private institution for mental disease

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 4/1/2017		
	The income limit changed April 1, 2017 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,295 (\$942 per month)	\$15,060 (\$1,255 per month)	\$26,355 (\$2,197 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,218 (\$1,269 per month)	\$20,290 (\$1,691 per month)	\$35,508 (\$2,959 per month)

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 8/1/2016 *Benefit change effective August 1, 2016 due to final state budget		
	\$250 monthly payment	\$175 monthly payment	*\$76 monthly payment
Individual	\$11,130 (\$928 per month)	\$14,840 (\$1,237 per month)	\$25,970 (\$2,165 per month)
Married Couple	\$15,015 (\$1,252 per month)	\$20,020 (\$1,669 per month)	\$35,035 (\$2,920 per month)

Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 4/1/2016 The income limit changed April 1, 2016 due to a change in the Federal Poverty Limit		
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Senior Household Size	Senior Benefits Program Gross Annual Income Limit Effective 3/1/2016 *Benefit change effective March 1, 2016 due to budget shortfall, caseload increase		
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Individual	\$11,040 (\$920 per month)	\$14,720 (\$1,227 per month)	\$25,760 (\$2,146 per month)
Married Couple	\$14,940 (\$1,245 per month)	\$19,920 (\$1,660 per month)	\$34,860 (\$2,905 per month)

Senior Benefits recipients as of April 2017

- 11,412 recipients. Number and percent of seniors at each payment level:
 - ✓ \$250 – 1,655 (14.5%)
 - ✓ \$175 – 4,935 (43.2%)
 - ✓ \$76 – 4,822 (42.3%)
- As of April 2017, the average age of recipients is 75 and the maximum age is 103.
- The number of Senior Benefits cases have been increasing each year until 2017. All figures are for April:

✓ 2017 – 11,412	✓ 2014 – 11,119
✓ 2016 – 11,855	✓ 2013 – 10,896
✓ 2015 – 11,366	✓ 2012 – 10,651

Recipients statewide as of April 2017:

Census Area	Number of Recipients	Census Area	Number of Recipients
Aleutians East	24	Lake and Peninsula	36
Aleutians West	30	Mat-Su	1,583
Anchorage	4,231	Nome	237
Bethel	526	North Slope	33
Bristol Bay	10	NW Arctic	158
Denali	16	Petersburg	89
Dillingham	116	Prince of Wales	206
Fairbanks N Star	872	SE Fairbanks	206
Haines	84	Sitka	98
Hoonah-Angoon	76	Skagway	8
Juneau	349	Valez / Cordova	156
Kenai	1,177	Wrangell	87
Ketchikan Gateway	269	Yakutat	16
Kodiak	236	Yukon / Koyukuk	252
Kusilvak	231	GRAND TOTAL	11,412

History of the Senior Benefits Program	
1972 - 2003	Alaska Longevity Bonus Program. Established in 1972. Alaska residents became eligible at age 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	Senior Assistance Program. 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	SeniorCare Program. 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	Senior Benefits Program. Established to replace the SeniorCare Program. Began August 2007; up for reauthorization in June 2018. Provides three payment levels 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. Regulation change finalized January 2016 described how benefits would be reduced by appropriation shortfall. Due to caseload increase, the highest income level that normally receives a \$125 benefit had the benefit reduced to \$47 effective March 1, 2016. The budgets for state fiscal years 2017 and 2018 allowed for a monthly payment of \$76 to recipients in the highest income level.

Fiscal Note

State of Alaska
2018 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 236
Fiscal Note Number: _____
() Publish Date: _____

Identifier: HB236-DHSS-SBPP-2-2-18
Title: EXTEND SENIOR BENEFITS PAYMENT PROGRAM
Sponsor: KAWASAKI
Requester: House HSS

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)

	FY2019 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2019 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
OPERATING EXPENDITURES								
Personal Services								
Travel								
Services								
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits	19,986.1		19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1		
Miscellaneous								
Total Operating	19,986.1	0.0	19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1	0.0	0.0

Fund Source (Operating Only)

1004 Gen Fund (UGF)	19,986.1		19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1		
Total	19,986.1	0.0	19,986.1	19,986.1	19,986.1	0.0	0.0

Positions

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

Change in Revenues

None							
Total	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2018) cost: 0.0 (separate supplemental appropriation required)
(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2019) 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? no
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? n/a

Why this fiscal note differs from previous version/comments:

Refreshed to SLA2018 form, updated figures.

Prepared By: Monica Windom, Director
Division: Public Assistance
Approved By: Shawnda O'Brien, Asst. Commissioner
Agency: Health and Social Services

Phone: (907)465-5835
Date: 02/02/2018 12:00 AM
Date: 02/02/18

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

**STATE OF ALASKA
2018 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

BILL NO. HB236

Analysis

HB 236 extends the Alaska Senior Benefits Payment Program from its current June 30, 2018 (FY2018) sunset through the end of FY2022. Therefore, the costs for this proposed legislation are for FY2019 through FY2022.

The regulations for the Senior Benefits Payment Program include language which instructs the division to reduce benefit payments for the highest income/lowest benefit tier to remain within the appropriated budget, when resources are short. Presently in SFY2018, the lowest benefit tier payment has therefore been reduced from \$125/month to \$76/month. For purposes of these projections, the department is continuing funding at its current level and determining the benefit amount of the highest income/lowest tier using projected growth.

Over the last five years, the division has experienced an annual average caseload growth rate of two percent. With the extension of the Senior Benefits Payment Program through FY2022, the division has projected benefit levels using this two percent caseload growth per fiscal year.

Projection for adjusted top tier income benefit group utilizing a flat funding level at the current appropriation of \$19,986.1 and thus adjusting the monthly benefit amount as needed for a projected 2% increase in caseload:

New Payment Level for Top Income Tier	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022
	\$69/mo	\$62/mo	\$55/mo	\$49/mo
Current Benefit Amount Per Income Level				
\$76/month	\$3,828.4	\$3,508.8	\$3,174.9	\$2,885.1
\$175/month	\$10,881.5	\$11,099.2	\$11,321.2	\$11,547.6
\$250/month	\$5,217.8	\$5,322.2	\$5,428.6	\$5,537.2
Total	\$19,927.7	\$19,930.1	\$19,924.7	\$19,969.9

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Teresa Storch [mailto:██]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 3:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Dear Legislators,

I am asking that Senior Benefits be extended to 2022' or indefinitely (preferably the latter). I went from being homeless to home ownership , thanks to law suit settlements that are now gone, but I will be homeless again without these benefits. At 66 years of age, retired from almost 20 years of commercial fishing due to disabilities, this is a terrifying prospect for me! My situation is complicated and details regarding my previous statement take too much time. I speak for many Kodiak senior women (I'm one of them) and men in saying that these benefits are vitally important to survive. There's been a monsoon here most of the summer and many gardens failed, although supplementing the food supplies for us was critical. The berry crop failed, too, even though some of us relied heavily on it to keep our food bills lowered; food is very costly on the island! I and others have to be on a special diet, which further complicates our situations: food banks often can't accommodate us

. The monsoon also prevented absolutely necessary roof repair and other similar projects from happening (or when it did, it was unsatisfactory), so seniors in particular are really hurting financially. The shortage of affordable housing here has reached a crisis stage, so there are few options for many low income Kodiak seniors, yet the homeless population here has swollen exponentially in the last several years.

Please leave these benefits as they are. Thank you

Sincerely,

Teresa Storch.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Gina Creedon [mailto:████████████████████@akleg.gov]
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2017 6:12 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Hi,

I am a disabled long term resident of Alaska. At present I receive \$8700/yr in SSI, and \$4344/yr in APA, for a total income of \$13,044 per year. I receive the Alaska Permanent Fund, but that is deducted from SSI over the course of the year at about \$85/mo. This is not an uncommon thing, because many people who came to Alaska interrupted their solid quarters of earnings, and so are not eligible for disability, or retirement, based on the income, but instead get the minimum, the same as I do, and will.

My debt payments and utilities leave me \$240/mo to spend on food, transportation, medical co-pays, soap, toilet paper, postage, and pet food... It is not very much.

APA will end when I am 62, and must convert SSI to regular retirement, and I will get \$597/mo, or \$7,164/yr, and no APA... My total income will drop below my debt payments on my home. I cannot declare bankruptcy because I don't owe enough, and IF I were to owe enough, I would lose my house, because I own too much of it. I cannot refinance my debt because I don't MAKE enough.

I will qualify for food stamps of \$126/mo, or \$4 per day for food. I will have no money at all for transportation, medical co-pays, prescription co-pays for drugs that I need to stay alive, I will have no toilet paper, no soap, no postage stamps, no phone - even the subsidized phone requires taxes to be paid on it to avoid cancellation. I will not be able to pay for heat or electricity. I will no longer be able to support my cat. I am terrified or the 3 years between my mandatory retirement and eligibility for the Senior Benefit, but I *might* make it....

If the Senior Benefit disappears, I will literally just die.

Thank you,

Gina Creedon

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Eric Thomas [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 9:42 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

I would like to make it known that this voter would like to see the program continue. In my work role I meet elderly community members who are already homeless or moments away from becoming homeless. The payments this program can offer do make a difference in the lives of the recipients and could contribute to keeping another one of our elders housed and out of the shelter system. Please do not allow this program to die.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Eric Thomas

Assessment Specialist, Homeless Family Services

Catholic Social Services

3710 East 20th Ave

Anchorage AK 99508

Phone: (907) 222-7300

Direct: (907) 222-7349

FAX: (907) 258-1091

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Bert Hansen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 3:36 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

My name is Bert Hansen I am 59 1/2 yo. I live at Chugach View a Senior and Handicapped Housing. I know first hand that the Senior Benefits Program helps many of the residents here and other places. It needs to continue without it many of the seniors would not be able to survive.

Besides the fact I am just about old enough to qualify!

So it is with great hopes that this program will continue not so much for me but for those that need it now!!

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

From: Patricia Partin [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 2:43 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello;

I am a lifelong Alaskan who is disabled, also lifelong, and retired in November 2014 after 49 years of employment. I am a member of AARP and I vote. I receive very little Social Security due to the system calibrations despite those 49 years of employment and depend on Medicare, Medicaid and Senior Benefits to live.

To cut back or destroy the Senior Benefits program is shortsighted, not well thought out and foolishly ignorant of cause and effect. If you take away monies that someone is depending on, you will cause that person to make cuts that will eventually need more and more public funding.

There seems to be a cut now and worry about consequences later these days or hope no one notices the consequences ability to cause even bigger problems not long down the road.

Instead of cutting needed programs such as Medical and education, perhaps look to issues and programs that are geared to political advantage? When you harm the seniors and the young, what is left?

--
Patricia

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council

From: Tanya Rose Gregory [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 9:36 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Cc: Bonnie Carroll-Ginnis <████████████████████>; Settle, Julie (HSS sponsored)
<████████████████████>
Subject: Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council

Morning,

I would like to be informed upcoming events/meeting for the Senior Benefits Program.

I work with and have elder clients here in Nikolai, Alaska. I am also, part-time Tribal Worker Department Specialist and State Of Alaska Fee Agent serving Nikolai, Alaska since 2013 to present.

I am very concerned for our Elders here in Nikolai, Alaska especially that they depend on the Senior Benefit Program and what could I do for this Region?

If there are any upcoming meeting/teleconferences about this program or other programs being changed, could I be also informed?

Kind Regards,

Tanya R. Gregory
Tribal Worker Dept. Specialist/Fee Agent
Nikolai Edzeno' Village Council
Ph. 907-293-2311

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: HB 236 call in

From: Lucia Ivanoff [mailto:████████████████████]]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 4:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 236 call in

My name is Lucia Ivanoff. I am the daughter of an Alaska Longevity Bonus Program recipient which throughout the years have had different titles and is presently the Senior Benefits Program. I am writing in support of this program for the Senior Citizens of Alaska.

My parents were hard workers season to season. My earliest memories include those of my parents both working in canneries in Kwiguk before summer camp and then again in St. Mary's from the time we moved there. As we came of age, my brothers and I worked as well in the cannery, Yukon Packers, in the village of St. Mary's until its closure. In the winter Mom made fur parkies and sold them for extra income throughout the season.

I remember going to store with her or rummaging through her shopping bags if I hadn't followed her there! There was always canned fruit, canned vegetables, tissue paper, tea, coffee, Crisco and many others. We were a family of many girls and boys and still for each evening we shared one can of vegetables and one can of fruit at our evening meal, these vegetables and fruit not being of any of the kind we picked and preserved throughout the season in the spring or summer.

I remember there were times I heard Mom exclaim that the program was no more, that it was over and she and other mothers would hope something else would be supplied, always, in hopes for the needs of their children.

I respectfully ask for the renewal of this HB 236 measure for our respected Elders of our Alaskan communities and thank you for the years it has been provided for them. Thank You!

Sincerely,

Lucia Ivanoff

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Housr Bill 236

From: James Heckeler [mailto:[\[REDACTED\]](mailto:)]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 2:14 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Housr Bill 236

To whom it may concern,

Please say yes to House Bill 236

Thank you
James R Heckeler

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: upcoming bill to extend benefits

From: Teresa Storch [redacted]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 3:17 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: upcoming bill to extend benefits

Dear Legislators,

I am asking that Senior Benefits be extended to 2022' or indefinitely (preferably the latter). I went from being homeless to home ownership , thanks to law suit settlements that are now gone, but I will be homeless again without these benefits. At 66 years of age, retired from almost 20 years of commercial fishing due to disabilities, this is a terrifying prospect for me! My situation is complicated and details regarding my previous statement take too much time. I speak for many Kodiak senior women (I'm one of them) and men in saying that these benefits are vitally important to survive. There's been a monsoon here most of the summer and many gardens failed, although supplementing the food supplies for us was critical. The berry crop failed, too, even though some of us relied heavily on it to keep our food bills lowered; food is very costly on the island! I and others have to be on a special diet, which further complicates our situations: food banks often can't accommodate us

. The monsoon also prevented absolutely necessary roof repair and other similar projects from happening (or when it did, it was unsatisfactory), so seniors in particular are really hurting financially. The shortage of affordable housing here has reached a crisis stage, so there are few options for many low income Kodiak seniors, yet the homeless population here has swollen exponentially in the last several years.

Please leave these benefits as they are. Thank you

Sincerely,

Teresa Storch.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

-----Original Message-----

From: Laurie [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 12:54 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

I just heard today through my local senior center that there is a plan to eliminate this benefit. I follow the news and other media and I am surprised that this is being suppressed in local news. It is unbelievable that you would take the PFD and now take another benefit from seniors. As many seniors, we live month to month on social security, barely able to pay the high cost of living in Alaska. I want to know exactly which legislators are supporting this. I will make a point of making sure it is all over social media and add those people to my now long growing list of who I will vote against their political position. Seniors are not the problem in Alaska, they are the responsible citizens. Why don't you focus on the crime and young freeloaders that has over run the state and do something that helps and protects us, instead of adding to the harm and difficulty to the aged that has no way to alter their situation.

L Olson
Kasilof Ak

Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House bill 236

-----Original Message-----

From: Joan Tower [mailto:joan.tower@akleg.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 5:25 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House bill 236

Sent from my iPhone I am 76 and receive senior benefits. In regards to Senior Benefits, I would like to know if they are considered to be income if one is eligible for adult public assistance. If so and senior benefits were eliminated, would public assistance benefits be increased by the same amount? if that is the case they should be eliminated as it would save money in the end by eliminating administrative costs to the senior benefits program. Sincerely Joan Tower

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

From: Patricia Partin [mailto:]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 2:43 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello;

I am a lifelong Alaskan who is disabled, also lifelong, and retired in November 2014 after 49 years of employment. I am a member of AARP and I vote. I receive very little Social Security due to the system calibrations despite those 49 years of employment and depend on Medicare, Medicaid and Senior Benefits to live.

To cut back or destroy the Senior Benefits program is shortsighted, not well thought out and foolishly ignorant of cause and effect. If you take away monies that someone is depending on, you will cause that person to make cuts that will eventually need more and more public funding.

There seems to be a cut now and worry about consequences later these days or hope no one notices the consequences ability to cause even bigger problems not long down the road.

Instead of cutting needed programs such as Medical and education, perhaps look to issues and programs that are geared to political advantage? When you harm the seniors and the young, what is left?

--

Patricia

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Support for Sr Benefit to extend past June 2018

From: Andrews, Caitlin [mailto:██]
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2017 4:49 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Support for Sr Benefit to extend past June 2018

To whom it may concern,

The Senior Benefit program is crucial for Alaska elders due to continuously rising costs of groceries, living expenses, prescription medications, and healthcare. Here at PeaceHealth Medical Group Primary Care, we see many elderly patients who have extensive, complicated health conditions and the small Senior monthly Benefit provides them chances to buy healthy food options in addition to paying their living expenses to remain as independent as possible.

This fund is crucial to overall health of our elders!

Sincerely,

Caitlin Andrews, LCSW | Social Worker | PHMG Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Women's Health, & Behavioral Health

[PeaceHealth](#) | 3100 Tongass Avenue | Ketchikan, AK 99901

office 907.228.8106

fax 907.228.8508

front desk 907.228.8140

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Comments on Senior Benefits Program

From: Tatyana Rogach [mailto:████████████████████] [\[mailto:████████████████████\]](mailto:████████████████████)
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 12:47 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Comments on Senior Benefits Program

Senior Benefits and PDF are holding people in Alaska.

Prices are going up with a dramatic speed and there is no indexation for seniors.

I have to buy a lot of over-the-counter supplements, vitamins, ointments for diabetes and arthritis, my memory issues, eye and ear medicine, as well as other medications. I spend on them about \$200 per month.

I mostly have to thrive on vegetables and fruit because of my high cholesterol.
I get a box with canned food from Salvation Army but it does not include fresh vegetables and fruit.

I do not know what my life could be like without Senior Benefits.

I thank Alaska Government for their thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,

Tatyana Rogach.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits Program

-----Original Message-----

From: Katherine Hayes [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 8:00 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits Program

To All Alaskan State Legislators

My name is Katherine Hayes. I am a 73 year old Alaskan of 31+ years. I have voted in every election.

After working all my life, I now find myself in poverty.
I never thought after working for more then 53 years I would be in this situation.

Divorce and Major Medical expenses destroyed my retirement savings completely.

Please do not remove the Senior Benefit Program.

I live on my Social Security and without this wonderful program I do not know what I would do. Rents, utilities, food, gas, & insurance is so expensive.

Please help Alaskan Seniors that have worked hard to build this State. Renew the Alaskan Senior Benefit Program.

Katherine Hayes

[REDACTED]
Wasilla, Alaska 99654

Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits

From: Audrey Sunnyboy (mailto: [REDACTED])
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 3:21 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits

Hello,
Please do not cut any of the benefits for Alaska's seniors-it is already far to difficult to try to live with what we have now-cutting any of the benefits would make life a lot more harder for many of us.
Yes, it's a plus that so many of us like to eat crackers because that's what we can afford now-we won't even have that if you start to cut benefits for us.
If you were like us, without your legislative retirement, you would appreciate our asking for this bit of grace when you retire.
Thank you,
Audrey Sunnyboy

age 71 (yes I have been able to live this long!
[REDACTED])



Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House Bill 236

From: Audrey Jones [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:21 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 236

We hope you will extend the Senior Benefit Program to 2022.

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

-----Original Message-----

From: January Grizzell [mailto:██]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 12:54 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

Please do not lower or discontinue the Senior Benefits Program.
Everything is going up except a seniors income. Groceries, utilities, transportation, housing, doctor and dental care, prescriptions, insurance, fuel, Medicare, postage and all general living expenses steadily rise.

There are all sorts of programs to provide safe housing for people who are homeless due to a life style of alcohol and drug abuse.
Often the Senior Benefit check is all that is keeping the next wave of homeless from being the seniors. Seniors who worked hard all their lives, paid their bills and played by the rules are struggling now to keep a roof over their head.

Please help us.
Thank you,
January Grizzell

Sent from my iPhone

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits continuation 2018++

From: rose po [mailto:]
Sent: Wednesday, September 27, 2017 2:55 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefits continuation 2018++

To All Alaska legislative representatives:

As a recipient of these benefits--which I use to purchase medicines and necessary/needed transportation to doctors, pharmacies, grocery stores--I sincerely urge you to continue this senior sustaining program for 2018 onward. Local studies are showing we Ak seniors are a downwardly mobile population facing steeply raising daily living, health, and transportation costs. Even facing these, many of us are trying to remain independently in our homes. Surely, it is much less costly to help us remain so independent than to incur high costs of public-supported and/or assisted living homes?

Certainly, after 40 years here, I do appreciate our Ak budgetary woes and hope for more fiscal responsibility from us all. Perhaps, to streamline the Senior Benefits Program, you could consolidate payments--have the same payment for all who qualify. Would this not reduce administrative costs?

Please, continue this program.

Thank you for your efforts on Alaska seniors' quality of life betterments.
rose potter

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

From: Gina Creedon [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Monday, September 25, 2017 6:12 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Please extend the Senior Benefit Program

Hi,

I am a disabled long term resident of Alaska. At present I receive \$8700/yr in SSI, and \$4344/yr in APA, for a total income of \$13,044 per year. I receive the Alaska Permanent Fund, but that is deducted from SSI over the course of the year at about \$85/mo. This is not an uncommon thing, because many people who came to Alaska interrupted their solid quarters of earnings, and so are not eligible for disability, or retirement, based on the income, but instead get the minimum, the same as I do, and will.

My debt payments and utilities leave me \$240/mo to spend on food, transportation, medical co-pays, soap, toilet paper, postage, and pet food... It is not very much.

APA will end when I am 62, and must convert SSI to regular retirement, and I will get \$597/mo, or \$7,164/yr, and no APA... My total income will drop below my debt payments on my home. I cannot declare bankruptcy because I don't owe enough, and IF I were to owe enough, I would lose my house, because I own too much of it. I cannot refinance my debt because I don't MAKE enough.

I will qualify for food stamps of \$126/mo, or \$4 per day for food. I will have no money at all for transportation, medical co-pays, prescription co-pays for drugs that I need to stay alive, I will have no toilet paper, no soap, no postage stamps, no phone - even the subsidized phone requires taxes to be paid on it to avoid cancellation. I will not be able to pay for heat or electricity. I will no longer be able to support my cat. I am terrified or the 3 years between my mandatory retirement and eligibility for the Senior Benefit, but I *might* make it....

If the Senior Benefit disappears, I will literally just die.

Thank you,

Gina Creedon

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefit Program

From: Bert Hansen [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 3:36 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Benefit Program

My name is Bert Hansen I am 59 1/2 yo. I live at Chugach View a Senior and Handicapped Housing. I know first hand that the Senior Benefits Program helps many of the residents here and other places. It needs to continue without it many of the seniors would not be able to survive.

Besides the fact I am just about old enough to qualify!

So it is with great hopes that this program will continue not so much for me but for those that need it now!!

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:55 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

From: Eric Thomas [mailto:██]
Sent: Friday, September 22, 2017 9:42 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Continuation of the Senior Benefits Program

I would like to make it known that this voter would like to see the program continue. In my work role I meet elderly community members who are already homeless or moments away from becoming homeless. The payments this program can offer do make a difference in the lives of the recipients and could contribute to keeping another one of our elders housed and out of the shelter system. Please do not allow this program to die.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Eric Thomas

Assessment Specialist, Homeless Family Services

Catholic Social Services

3710 East 20th Ave

Anchorage AK 99508

Phone: (907) 222-7300

Direct: (907) 222-7349

FAX: (907) 258-1091

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: House Bill 236

From: Coleen Mielke [mailto:██]
Sent: Wednesday, September 20, 2017 1:10 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: House Bill 236

Please pass House Bill 236.....it means the difference between living with dignity and not being able to afford the necessities of life. As life long Alaskan's we beg you to PASS HOUSE BILL 236.

Thank you,

John and Coleen Mielke

Wasilla, Alaska

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:56 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Benefits House HSS Listening Session, ACoA Testimony
Attachments: House HSS, HB 236 Listening Session Testimony, 9.28.2017.docx

From: Daniello, Denise L (HSS) [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:53 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Senior Benefits House HSS Listening Session, ACoA Testimony

Dear Chair Spohnholz and House HSS Committee Members,

I have attached testimony from the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) that was presented yesterday during the Senior Benefits Listening Session sponsored by the House Health and Social Services Committee. David Blacketer, ACoA's Chair, is copied on this correspondence. Please let me know if there are questions or requests for further information.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for public members to share their stories. It was much appreciated!

Denise

Denise Daniello
Executive Director | Alaska Commission on Aging
Department of Health and Social Services
240 Main Street, Suite 100
PO Box 110693 | Juneau, AK 99811-0693
907.465.4879 | [REDACTED]
www.alaskaaging.org

Healthy Aging for Alaskans Across the Lifespan

House HSS Listening Session: Senior Benefits Extension
September 28, 2017
Testimony

- For the record, my name is Denise Daniello and I serve as the Executive Director for the Alaska Commission on Aging.
- The Commission on Aging is a Governor-appointed board within the Department of Health and Social Services that plans services for seniors, educates Alaskans about senior issues, and advises policymakers on matters related to policy and budget items that affect older Alaskans.
- On behalf of the Commission, we thank Chair Spohnholz and members of House Health and Social Services Committee for hosting this Listening Session.
- Financial security is a serious worry for many older people living on fixed incomes. Senior Benefits is a critical component of the Senior Safety Net. It has a proven track record of providing support for older Alaskans whose incomes are simply not enough to pay for their total food, housing, heat, and health care costs or cover an emergency need like a boiler breaking down during the dead of winter.
- Over the years, growth in the number of seniors participating in the Senior Benefits program has been modest. Since the last time this program was reauthorized in 2014, the annual enrollment figures have increased about an average of 1.7% statewide, even though the population of people age 65 and older increased 3.7% annually.
- Statewide, about one in 7 seniors (or 14.5% of persons age 65+) participates in this program.
- The risk of living in poverty increases with age, as older people spend down their assets on health care and living expenses. Older Alaskans most likely to benefit from Senior Benefits include seniors who are older than 75; older people living alone; those who worked low paying jobs being unable to save much while they were working and are now receiving minimal Social Security benefits; Alaskans who live subsistence lifestyles in rural and remote communities with little cash income; full-time homemakers and stay-at-home parents who worked outside of the paid workforce; and the oldest old – (people in their 80s, 90s and a growing number of Centenarians) who spend increasing amounts of their fixed income on health and basic necessities.
- The Commission on Aging sincerely thanks Representative Kawasaki for sponsoring HB 236 to extend the Senior Benefits program and the bill co-sponsors. We believe Senior Benefits is good public policy that provides support for older Alaskans who are most vulnerable to economic stresses and allows them to live with dignity and independence, which has a positive impact on senior health and well-being. Thank you.

Mercedes Colbert

From: akhouse@belfast.servershost.net on behalf of WordPress <wordpress@akhouse.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 11:51 AM
To: Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: You got a message "senior benefits-a thank you to you"

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

From: Francesca Burgess
Subject: senior benefits-a thank you to you

Message Body:

Thank you, Representative Kawasaki, for standing up for folks receiving the Senior Benefits amounts. For proposing to extend the Senior Benefits "shelf life".

I read a letter in the Juneau Empire from Representative Dan Saddler, Eagle River, that basically stated he thinks most seniors don't need this financial help. That they have land holdings, boats, extra properties, etc. That we don't need a little extra. That is so not true!!!

Most people I know in my age bracket are struggling through their finances, juggling everything.

And mostly for reasons such as unexpected illnesses/deaths for themselves or a spouse or other family member, or financial turns not expected or any other number of valid reasons. The Senior Benefits are relied upon.

The majority of seniors have worked all their lives, raised families, doing their best to take care of them, and are usually stronger people for it. But finances are quite a major consideration. Most being unable to save substantial money caches in their lifetime.

I really cannot understand how doing away with Senior Benefits will "help" eliminate the Alaska debt.

So, again, I sincerely, immensely thank you for taking time to give your ideas to the legislature. Your thoughts and hard work are greatly appreciated!!! God bless you richly for your kindness!!!

Sincerely,
Francesca Burgess

--

This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Representative SCOTT KAWASAKI's legislative website (http://akhouse.org/rep_kawasaki/contact-me/)

Mercedes Colbert

From: House Health and Social Services
Sent: Wednesday, October 11, 2017 1:37 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior benefits statewide listening

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

-----Original Message-----

From: Kimberly A. Starks [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Saturday, September 30, 2017 12:01 PM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior benefits statewide listening

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of my father

John T.Riley.

If the day comes that senior benefits are cut it would hurt a lot of seniors not just my dad. Senior benefits help greatly with the survival mode as seniors get older.

So with that being said dad and I both hope they are not going to be cut! Including myself for in a few years I to will be eligible!

Thank-you!!

Be Blessed,

Kimberly A. Starks

Sister Kimberly A. Starks

Mercedes Colbert

From: Ted Madsen on behalf of House Health and Social Services
Sent: Friday, September 29, 2017 2:54 PM
To: Mercedes Colbert
Subject: FW: Senior Letters
Attachments: Senior Letters.pdf

From: Kathy Romain [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: Thursday, September 28, 2017 8:58 AM
To: House Health and Social Services <lhsches@akleg.gov>
Subject: Senior Letters

Hello,

We do not have the capability at this time for a large audience to listen into the Teleconference, so we asked our seniors how they used their Senior Benefits. Please see their responses in the attachment. We anticipate more coming.

Thank you!

Kathy Romain



KATHY ROMAIN
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT III

KOWA SENIOR CENTER
VINTAGE FONTE MANOR
381 Senior Court
Kenai, AK 99541
907-285-9223
907-283-2200 FAX

Helping People to Age with Dignity

My Senior Benefits help with I am so thank full
for the Senior Benefits check. It helps
paying my utilities, so please don't
take it away. I count on it so much,
specially in the winter.
Thank you so much

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Sheryle Coon

~~████████████████████~~

Kenai AK 99611

Name

Address

Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with pay my electric bill, rent and
car insurance

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Randall C. Leitch Name
[REDACTED] Soldotna, AK 99669 Address
907 [REDACTED] Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with my electric bill,
gas, oil, oil and coal - food items at the grocery store.
I so appreciate the extra help this provides.
Thank you very much.

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Vivian K. Terry Name
[REDACTED] Kenai, Ak 99611 Address
907 [REDACTED] Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with my income in the
house if I did not receive Senior
Benefits I could not pay my bills,
thank you so much. I do without
TV, do not have any medications or
prescriptions yet. I would not be able to afford
Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program. *these*
extras!

Thank you, DONNA HUTTON
[REDACTED]
Kenai, AK 99611

Name

Address

Phone Number

907-[REDACTED]

My Senior Benefits help with my Medications

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Alice Nuroll
[Redacted] Kenai AK
[Redacted]

Name

Address

Phone Number

I don't receive ~~My~~ Senior Benefits ^{as of yet} but if they are not in place when I turn 65 it won't be able to supply myself with the necessities as I will receive \$700 amount in Social Security and I will be 65 in July 2018.

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Ann Marie Lee Name KEWAI, AK
[REDACTED] Address 907-3 [REDACTED] Phone Number 99611

My Senior Benefits help with Paying my Bills,
Electric, No STAR I could
not manage without these
benefits

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Angela Poage Name
[REDACTED] - Kenai AK 99607 Address
[REDACTED] Phone Number

My Senior Benefits help with utilities (electric, phone) & food

Please continue to support Alaska's Senior Benefits Program.

Thank you, Christina Demaloff
[REDACTED]
Kenai [REDACTED]

Name
Address
Phone Number