

STATE OF ALASKA THE LEGISLATURE

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Legislative
Resolve No.
79



Urging the Governor to direct the Department of Health and Social Services to proceed without delay to gain federal approval of Medicaid waivers and options for home and community-based services.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS, in response to ch. 26, SLA 1990, the Governor's Council for the Gifted and Handicapped and the Older Alaskans Commission have submitted their respective reports to the legislature and the Department of Health and Social Services indicating a high and increasing need for long-term care and recommending strong support for home and community-based services as a preferred alternative for meeting that need; and

WHEREAS the use of Medicaid waivers and options to expand home and community-based alternatives to institutional care has broad support from the public and the medical community in the state; and

WHEREAS Alaskans have long stated their desire for a home and community-based care system that allows families and friends to stay together within culturally familiar surroundings, especially during times of distressing and long-term health needs; and

WHEREAS Alaska has a growing population needing an institutional level care that

would, if not for the home and community-based alternatives available under Medicaid waivers and options, require additional investment in construction and operation of additional health care facilities; and

WHEREAS the cost of long-term care in an institutional setting averages about \$7,000 a month or more, and many Alaskans needing long-term care could be served within their own homes and communities for the same or less cost; and

WHEREAS several children in Alaska must now live within a hospital due to their fragile medical condition, but would be able to afford the care they need while living at home with their families if the state had what is known as a Medicaid "TEFRA" waiver and option; and

WHEREAS waivers and options allow state home care programs to be augmented with federal Medicaid dollars, thereby decreasing the pressure to expand general fund requirements during times of decreasing state resources; and

WHEREAS the legislature recognizes that Alaska's hospitals and nursing homes are an essential part of the state's total health care system, but home and community-based care is needed to provide a choice for those who can benefit from it;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully urges the Governor to direct the Department of Health and Social Services to proceed without delay to gain approval from the Federal Health Care Financing Administration for Medicaid waivers and options to support home and community-based care services for children who are medically fragile, children and adults with developmental disabilities, elderly Alaskans, and physically disabled Alaskans who, were it not for the availability of home and community-based services, would have to live in an institution to receive the care they need; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislature respectfully urges the Governor to direct the Department of Health and Social Services to do the following when the department prepares applications to get federal approval of Medicaid waivers and options relating to children:

- (1) listen to and incorporate the concerns of families in the state;
- (2) allow parents, advocates, and professionals to be involved with the development of the criteria for the definition of "at risk of institutionalization"; and

(3) allow the division of mental health and developmental disabilities, along with the division of medical assistance, to play a key role in the service design and policy of Medicaid waivers and options.

A **COPY** of this resolution shall be sent to Dr. Theodore Mala, commissioner of health and social services.