



Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition

Quality Care • Care Coordination • Social Engagement

Alaska's seniors are one of the state's strongest and fastest-growing economic forces. In 2023, Alaskans aged 60 and older generated an estimated \$6.7 billion in economic activity—exceeding tourism, minerals, and seafood combined. Their steady spending, high homeownership rates, 82% statewide, and continued participation in the workforce making up 6.2% of Alaskan workers make seniors a vital anchor of local economies statewide.¹

Yet the system responsible for supporting this economic engine, Alaska's eldercare sector—is rapidly contracting. Social assistance employment in Southeast Alaska has declined by more than 30% since 2015, and providers across the region continue to report severe workforce shortages. The 2024 JEDC Southeast Alaska Eldercare Survey found universal difficulty in hiring and retaining staff, with demand far outpacing capacity. Southeast Alaska providers were serving 264 seniors while another 256 remained on active waiting lists.

These shortages jeopardize both senior wellbeing and the stability of a major statewide economic sector. Without strategic intervention, limited access to care will increase long-term state costs, restrict seniors' ability to age safely in their homes, and strain rural communities already facing high health-care expenses.

For these reasons, we respectfully request your partnership in strengthening Alaska's eldercare system through targeted investment. Such action will:

- Expand one of Alaska's most reliable and fastest-growing economic markets
- Create stable, year-round jobs across the state
- Reduce long-term state costs associated with unmanaged chronic conditions and premature institutionalization

During this legislative session we ask you to:

- Protect funding in the Governor's budget for non-Medicaid grants which make Home and Community-Based services possible for older Alaskans.
- Support the Department of Health to implement the Alaska Rural Health Transformation Program with a focus on funding of meaningful projects and providing resources needed by non-profits and tribes when lack of administrative funding is the primary barrier to implementation.

The Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition, representing more than 130 providers, advocates, and community partners, stands ready to collaborate on practical solutions that strengthen eldercare access, bolster economic resilience, and ensure seniors can continue aging with dignity in their home communities.

Thank you for your service and attention to this critical issue. We welcome the opportunity to meet, share additional data, and discuss strategies that will fortify Alaska's eldercare system for generations to come. We have regional virtual monthly meeting the first Friday of the month by Zoom, you are welcome to join us.

Sincerely,



Erin Walker-Tolles, SREC Steering Committee Co-Chair and Executive Director Catholic Community Service on behalf of the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition



Sharyl Yeilsey, SREC Steering Committee Co-Chair, Owner of Wellness Within LLC and Care Coordinator On behalf of the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition

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Assist Alaskans through your support for:

- Movement forward of House Bill 133 and Senate Bill 129 to ensure prompt payments to Senior Services grantees.
- Support funding for non-Medicaid grants which make possible home and community-based services for older Alaskans.
- Protect the \$1,150,000 in the Governor's budget for the Mental Health Trust: Home modifications and upgrades to retain housing.
- Support the Department of Health to implement the Alaska Rural Health Transformation Program with a focus on funding of meaningful projects and providing resources needed by non-profits and tribes when lack of administrative funding is the primary barrier to implementation.