

# The Issues: Testimony from the hearings

The following is a sampling of the public comments received by the committee. Complete summaries of the testimony from any or all of the hearings are available upon request.

## Anchorage

"There is a need for a consistent policy on services to the aging." - ALLEN KOR—HONEN, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services

"One of the things this points up is that we have no central way in this state of consolidating information about old people. That was one of the reasons why this committee came into existence. There is no single agency in state government that has responsibility for the development of policy toward aging." - TED DRAHN, Member, State Committee on Services to the Elderly

"If we could make arrangements so that we are not doing a disservice to the other age groups. I would say a Division of Aging - Adult Protective Services - whatever one would wish to call it, would be commendable...I don't think we're being innovative enough in our Office of Aging. I think we are getting federal money and we're following federal criteria. In order to become innovative, we do have to spend state money." - HELEN BIERNE, Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services.

"I'd like to go on record for the Department of Administration: we are 100 percent in favor of the home care program." - BILL MCUMTRY, Manager, Anchorage Pioneers' Home

"The committee should introduce legislation to authorize and provide sufficient funding for the decentralized home health care program, which will allow local areas to receive funding and provide such services." - KODIAK ISLAND BOROUGH HEALTH RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

"That is nursing wing adjacent to the Anchorage Pioneers' Home is as it should be. It's place where those who have entered the Pioneers' Home with the idea of their remaining years among friends, that they would be able to be near those friends when they approach the dying times." - HAROLD MAXWELL, Resident, Anchorage Pioneers' Home

"There is no way this program (Homemakers) should be (administered) statewide." - EDNA ADRIAN, Member, Mayor's Commission on Senior Citizens

"There is a need for a comprehensive policy on aging on the state level for better coordination...The three big reasons why seniors like to stay in their own homes are self determination, sense of autonomy and continuation of traditional roles in familiar environments." - CHUCK MUNDORFF, Consultant on Aging, Anchorage Community Mental Health Center

"There is nothing (no home health care)." - ELLEN EVANS, Director, Bethel Senior Citizens Programs

"I think the big thing is to make them feel needed, let them know they are still useful." - MILES MURPHEY, Mayor of Hoonah

"Be it resolved that this unique system of care for the Great Land (Pioneers' Homes) be retained within the Department of Administration and not transferred to any other

## Kotzebue

"One of the problems acting as a barrier to effective discharge from the (Kotzebue PHS) hospital is lack of home helpers." - SARAH ZACHARES, Head Nurse, Kotzebue Public Health services Hospital

"We're not really a Pioneers' Home, but we're trying to act in the absence of one, so that some of the regulations they apply to Pioneers' Homes don't apply to a wide-open, multi-purpose senior center with 24-hour care such as ours. Because nobody else in the state has one, in a lot of ways we're laying out the groundwork for how things can be done. As a result, I have disagreements with state officials as to what is proper. Maybe we take the liberal approach as to interpreting expenses, and they want to take the more strict Pioneers' Homes approach." - DENNIS TIEPLEMAN, President, Maunelak Corporation

"The five most pressing needs for elders in our region are long-term care nursing beds, employment, the Homemakers program, pay for free agents processing Old Age Assistance and SSI forms, and help with chores." - BERNIE SCHWIND, Regional Manager, Division of Public Assistance

"The Homemakers program is one of the most effective tools to keep people in their own homes." - KEITH MARTIN, Social Workers, Division of Social Services.

## Fairbanks

"The philosophy of the homes since 1913 has been for the Pioneers' Home to be a home and also a place where the residents and guests may die in dignity." - STELLA MUCKENTHALER, Manager, Fairbanks Pioneers' Home

"I wouldn't want any better care. I can't see where I could have any more dignity than I do at the Pioneers' Home. I don't consider it an institution, it's more like living in a hotel." - LLOYD ALKEN, Resident, Fairbanks Pioneers' Home

"We provide not only housekeeping care, but personal care. We provide personal care in bathing, getting to the store, doing laundry, picking up groceries, cooking lunch - if you need it and it's within our program - we're glad to have you as one of our clients. One of the nice things about the Homemakers program as it is now is that it is based on need, and not of necessity income. I think a lot of our clients - particularly our senior citizens' clients - are not aware that they don't have to be on welfare, they don't have to be totally without funds, in order to be eligible for our services because you certainly are." - NORA YOUNG, Regional Supervisor, Homemakers Program

"Over half of the elderly surveyed in the report (senior housing) are paying over 50 percent of their income on housing." - NANCY WEBB, Planner, Fairbanks North Star Borough

## Sitka

Department, thus continuing the existing policies and concepts evolved over the many years...That the Grand Igloo, Pioneers of Alaska urges the continued and expanded skilled nursing care within this system." - GRAND IGLOO PIONEERS OF ALASKA

## Written Comments

"There is a current trend to deemphasize 'premature institutionalization' and I agree with its premise. However, if in our zeal to promote this idea we forget that institutions are and will continue to be needed for our elderly we will be doing more harm than good. It would be a grave mistake for Alaska to do away with the models we have in the Pioneers' Homes." - FRANK SISSON, Douglas Resident

"There are a limited number of persons that really need Pioneers' Homes due to financial and physical needs, but \$225-275/ month for total care is too good to look any farther. Many of these persons can afford independent or alternate care but refuse to admit to Pioneers' Homes have become so broad that that is no need to look further. I would suggest this matter needs further research before more buildings are built." - GAYLE ROWLAND, Palmer Resident

"Let's be modern minded enough to research the many alternatives for care of the aged available to Alaskans today before we rush into another project that will require large taxpayer funding for maintenance over the years. I'm not suggesting we abandon what we have but we should adjust the program to the times we are living in. Let's honor the Pioneer of old for his values. He would be the first to want us to consider conservation of energy and conservation of tax money. It wasn't the youngsters who started Proposition 13 it was the Senior Citizens who were still paying taxes." - CLAIRE KOPPERUD, Palmer Resident

"The State should maintain current situation with regard to long term in-patient care but gradually make transition so that in the future all seniors over 65 would be eligible for the same range of services. All long term inpatient care beds, including those in Pioneers' Homes, should come under certification of need so that all are subject to the same public input requirements. An alternative source of state funding should be available to all seniors in situations where they do not qualify for a public assistance program to help with the cost of long-term inpatient care. Individuals should have a maximum limit set on what they should have to pay out-of-pocket for such services annually and any additional amount should be absorbed through a special state fund." - BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SOUTH CENTRAL HEALTH PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT, INC.

"Be it enacted by the Alaska State Legislature that the sum of \$1 million dollars be appropriated for the purpose of assisting providers of Home Support Services in localities throughout the state." - PROJECT DIRECTORS, Office of Aging

"Homemakers services is highly desirable if well supervised, well trained and administered." - LOUISE ARGETSINGER, Juneau Resident

"We have a local need for housing elderly people, who are no longer able to fend for themselves, such as found in other larger communities within the state. Familiar surroundings, beloved family, friends and especially grandchildren whom they especially enjoy, take on added meaning to the elderly. To remove our unfortunate to far-off facilities where they are often strangers and where they will no longer receive cherished visitations from life-long friends is cruel even though they are given utmost care and treatment professionally. We firmly suggest that the State of Alaska aid the emotional well-being and dignity of those incapacitated by illness, who refuse to leave what they deem their last necessities." - METLAKATLA SENIOR CITIZENS

"I would like to dispell some of the former criticisms as regards things that happen to patients in long-term care. Some examples include: all patients in long-term care facilities have bed sores. The fact is, on admission four percent of patients do and two percent developed bed sores while in a nursing home. Patients in nursing homes all have urinary catheters. The fact is, eight percent of patients on admission have catheters and four percent of the patients have catheters during their stay. Physicians have abandoned the patients in nursing homes and there are no consultations. The fact is, 52% of the physicians visit their patient every 30 days, 40% visit every 60 days, 5% visit every 90 days, and 2% every six months. One of the major deterrents for physicians' visits in a long-term care facility is poor reimbursements for their seeing their patients. Another criticism is that all patients in extended care facilities are restrained. The fact is, 69% of patients of long-term care facilities have no restraints. Another criticism is 'nursing homes are full of vegetative patients.' The fact is, 2% are comatose patients, 8% of patients have inappropriate or aggressive behavior and 26% of patients are disoriented. Another criticism is the patients in long-term facilities have a high incidence of accidents. Documented fact proves that only 3 to 5% of patients have an accident. With the escalating senior citizen population it is incumbent upon the health care field to provide the patient, most compassionate care which meets the total needs of the senior citizen. I strongly urge your consideration for examining closely the patient assessment tool." - JULIA H. FORD, Director of Nursing Services, Careage North

"I agree with the expressed concern that most older people prefer to stay in their own dwelling and make their own decisions. The Pioneers' Homes are splendid for those who need care, and I cheer the people who run them. However, I would find it a sad day indeed if I had to enter one." - WILLIAM GREEN, Anchorage Resident