



Alaska State Legislature

Representative Sarah Vance

House District 6

March 14, 2024

The Honorable Heidi Hedberg, Commissioner
Alaska Department of Health
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-5923

Via Email at heidi.hedberg@alaska.gov

Dear Commissioner Hedberg,

I extend my sincere gratitude for taking the time to meet with me regarding the pressing concerns surrounding the Senior and Disability Services (SDS) within the Department of Health. As we discussed, these critical matters were brought to my attention by both the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, as well as individuals within the developmentally disabled community.

I greatly value your insights into the ongoing efforts of SDS and the Department of Health to address these issues, despite the challenges posed by federal regulations and procedural complexities hindering the implementation process. Your acknowledgment of SDS's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under AS 47.80.130(a)(7), particularly in enabling individuals to actively participate in managing their support services, underscores the fundamental importance of self-direction and autonomy in enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

Furthermore, I appreciate your recognition of the pivotal role that environmental modifications, such as ramps, lifts, and roll-in showers, play in overcoming barriers to independence and community integration for older adults and individuals with disabilities. It is evident that the deficiencies in the availability and utilization of Environmental Modifications Program (E-Mod) services statewide, particularly in rural areas, pose significant challenges to the safety and well-being of individuals while incurring unnecessary costs for the state under Medicaid.

In light of these challenges, I am encouraged by the reforms and solutions that you are actively pursuing. I firmly believe that initiatives such as increasing the E-Mod cap to \$40,000 over three years and establishing a separate funding category for shipping costs will provide vital support for necessary modifications, particularly in underserved areas. Moreover, implementing a variance mechanism for approving E-Mods above the cap and simplifying contractor certification and bidding processes will foster greater efficiency and participation in the delivery of E-Mod services.

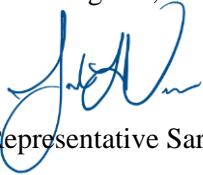
I wholeheartedly endorse the proposal mandating thorough home assessments, such as HomeMAP™, for Medicaid Waiver recipients. Additionally, I am in favor of removing the Scope of Work requirement for Care Coordinators, a move that will significantly streamline the delivery of E-Mod services. While I understand that SDS is currently working on these programs and that full implementation may take several years, I urge all involved parties to prioritize expediting this process. It's crucial that we make

every effort to accelerate these initiatives to ensure that seniors and individuals with disabilities promptly gain access to the independence they rightfully deserve.

Your commitment to taking immediate action to address these issues and ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the support services they need to lead fulfilling lives is commendable. I am eager to collaborate further with you and your department to make meaningful progress in creating a more supportive environment for all Alaskans.

Once again, I express my gratitude for your time and attention to these matters. Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can be of assistance to your department as you continue to navigate these important issues.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Vance', written in a cursive style.

Representative Sarah Vance