

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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December 18, 2010

Representative Les Gara
Alaska State Capitol, Room 500
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182

Re: Support for legislation that requires retiree health insurance coverage to include colorectal screening and colonoscopies

Dear Representative Gara:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) supports legislation that amends AS 39.30.090(a) to require health insurance plans offered by the state and by participating government units for public service retirees to include coverage for colorectal screening, such as colonoscopies.

According to research conducted by the National Cancer Institute, age is a significant risk factor that positively correlates with an increased chance of developing colorectal cancer. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the nation after lung cancer. Screening for colorectal cancer has been demonstrated to be effective in the prevention of colorectal cancer as well as being critical for early diagnosis that allows for treatment before the disease has had the opportunity to spread.

While Medicare covers the cost of colorectal screening for beneficiaries, such as retired persons who are 65 years and older, State and other public health care insurance plans for retirees do not always provide this coverage. Public service retirees younger than age 65 and ineligible for Medicare are not covered for this procedure under state and certain local government health insurance plans.


ACoA supports this legislation to include health care coverage for colorectal screening for public service retirees who are not insured by their existing plans. Cancer screening is critical for prevention and effective early treatment. It is a proven cost saving measure that is essential for maintaining good health and reducing the need for high cost health care services related to cancer treatment.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director