



Representative Beth Kerttula

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Sponsor Statement

House Bill 460

Permanent Fund Dividend Allowable Absences

To receive a Permanent Fund Dividend, an Alaskan must meet certain criteria, including a requirement that the person not be absent from the state more than 180 days. The legislature has defined certain "allowable absences," circumstances in which an Alaskan can claim an exception to the 180-day rule.

In 1996, House Bill 198 expanded the list of allowable absences to include, among other things, "providing care for a parent, spouse, sibling, child, or stepchild with a critical life-threatening illness whose treatment plan, as recommended by the attending physician, requires travel outside the state for treatment at a medical specialty complex."

This past summer I was contacted by a constituent who had to travel out of state to care for her son who lives in the Lower 48 and was critically injured in an accident. Unfortunately, since the son did not *travel* out of state for treatment, my constituent was denied her dividend because of the current language.

The intent of the original legislation was to ensure that people who sacrificed and put their lives on hold to care for a loved one were not denied their dividend for doing so. House Bill 460 would allow a person to care for a critically ill family member who either lives out of state or happened to be out of state when they became ill. Whether someone had to travel for treatment or not should not be the critical issue in determining eligibility for the Permanent Fund Dividend.

Most Alaskans have at least one close family member living outside the state of Alaska. When a family member is in critical condition, it is a difficult and trying time. Let us give them one less thing to worry about.