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The Honorable Bill Wielechowski
Senate Finance Subcommittee: DMVA
Alaska State Legislature

February 10, 2021

Senator Wielechowski,

The State's Unified Command has been exemplary in its planning, response, and coordination during the State's declared disaster. While there have been lessons learned throughout – and work we would encourage to better integrate local governments into these processes – it is clear that they've had their work cut out for them.

We are pleased to see funding in place for Alaska Public Safety Communication Services, formerly ALMR and SATS. These have been integral parts of Alaska's communication and emergency response system, which AML has advocated in support of for many times over the years. It appears that these are now being combined under a new heading, and we ask this subcommittee to learn more about what impact this will have in. From your Subcommittee review, we would encourage an explanation be given about the consolidation of ALMR and SATS into the Alaska Public Safety Communication Services. We want to ensure that there is no reduction to service or outcomes is anticipated, and the measures by which this is ensured; and funding is sufficient to achieve the continued effectiveness of these programs.

On another front, funding for Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) was eliminated from the last two budgets, just as Alaska's local governments were in the midst of responding to an unparalleled public health crisis. Many were less prepared than they might otherwise have been due to the loss of funding in support of local emergency planning efforts. This \$500,000 is just a small piece of the budget, and the allocation by community is small as well, but they have outsized impacts in the big picture. We encourage the Legislature to double this support as local governments reflect on the lessons learned from the pandemic, their own and the State's response, and apply these to emergency planning and coordination.

Thank you for your consideration of these questions and the needs of Alaska's local governments.

Respectfully,

Nils Andreassen
Executive Director