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Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

The Honorable David Wilson
Chair, Senate Finance Subcommittee: Corrections
Alaska State Legislature

February 10, 2021

Senator Wilson,

Alaska is one of the few states with a unified court system, which makes Corrections a State responsibility. This is different than the system of county courts elsewhere – this structure simply does not exist in Alaska. However, many local governments have taken on police powers, not just to enforce municipal law but the State’s as well. This results in the capacity to partner in this system of public safety within Alaska. As it relates to Corrections, this partnership is expressed in the form of Community and Regional Jails. Local governments manage these jails on behalf of the State, as basically pre-trial holding cells.

AML members passed the following as part of its resolutions process:

Whereas, 15 local governments provide community and regional jails on behalf of the State’s criminal justice system; and these jails are an integral part of local and state law enforcement; and

Whereas, State funding for community and regional jails has been static for the last three years, and if adjusted for inflation represents pre-2002 levels of State investment; and in many cases, State funding is only 50% of the full cost of managing the jail on the State’s behalf, and in all cases deficient; and

Now, therefore be it resolved that AML calls on the Governor and Legislature to fully fund community and regional jails, requiring at least an additional \$5 million more than the \$7 million currently budgeted.

Senator, AML is requesting this Subcommittee to require from the Department justification of flat funding of this program for now six years, including a complete analysis of State vs. local expenditures in support of the program. As an outcome of this process, we encourage you to consider increasing this line item from \$7 million to \$10 million, even as Dept. of Corrections will need to renegotiate its contracts with local governments delivering this State service. Partnerships need to be mutually beneficial. At some point the State risks so underfunding community and regional jails that it is no longer beneficial for communities to maintain and operate them.

Respectfully,

Nils Andreassen
Executive Director