

**CITY OF UNALASKA**  
43 Raven Way - P.O. Box 610  
Unalaska, Alaska 99685  
TEL (907) 581-1251 FAX (907) 581-4469



April 8, 2021

Representative Neal Foster  
State Capitol Room 505  
Juneau AK, 99801

Representative Kelly Merrick  
State Capitol Room 511  
Juneau, AK 99801

**Re: House Finance Budget Testimony**

Dear Representative Foster and Representative Merrick,

Thank you for taking the time to consider comments and for all your efforts on behalf of all Alaskans.

The City of Unalaska is working hard to fulfill its obligations as a local government, in spite of the various challenges that we've faced as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic and our location in the Aleutian region. Our ability to do so is limited by statute, public interest, and available resources. As a result of this, we strongly support recapitalizing the Community Assistance Fund to its full amount to provide funding stability for local governments during these uncertain times. We support retaining the shared taxes in place for distribution to communities in the proposed budget.

We support all efforts leading to Reliable and High-Speed Internet, such as funding for broadband assistance and internet for schools. Unalaska's internet connection speeds impede business growth, medical services, post-secondary education, and overall quality of life. Residents are unable to fully utilize cloud-based systems to improve efficiencies and effectiveness in personal, educational, medical, and business processes. We need to do all we can to bridge this digital divide.

The cost of living in these remote areas of the state continues to grow, and Unalaska supports the PCE payment for high energy costs in most of Alaska to help cushion these expenses for our residents.

We support funding for the Alaska Marine Highway System and continue to advocate for service to Unalaska. The AMHS provides a cost-effective way for community members and businesses to travel and ship equipment and materials. The Ferry is how teachers move to this island, this is how our Aleutian Island neighbors access critical stores and services, this is how large families can travel off the island to visit loved ones, this is how the mobile mammogram van comes to our community to provide life-altering healthcare. The Alaska Marine Highway System provides an essential service to Unalaska and is necessary for our community health, safety, economic and social wellbeing.

Unalaska also supports funding for harbor facility matching grants, a component of the agreement made in the transfer of these State assets to municipal governments. We especially are in favor of funding for Unalaska's Bobby Storrs Boat Harbor, which was inherited by the City of Unalaska from the State of Alaska.

Also, our Public Safety and emergency preparedness are vital for remote communities like Unalaska. Funding for community and regional jail agreements has remained flat since 2015, and are being supported by local governments like the City of Unalaska. We also support Reinstating the Local Emergency Planning Committee funding so that local governments are better prepared for crises such as those experienced during this pandemic and natural disasters.

Again, thank you for your service to all Alaskans, and the opportunity to address these pressing issues in writing on behalf of the City of Unalaska.

Sincerely,



Erin Reinders  
City Manager  
City of Unalaska