

RESOLUTION #2023-08

A resolution supporting the establishment of public safety matching funds by the State.

WHEREAS, it is the State's constitutional obligation to provide for public health and public wellness, which should be understood to include the provision of public safety through sufficient law enforcement, fire and emergency response, and corrections; and

WHEREAS, as political subdivisions of the State, local governments take on the majority of these responsibilities, with the vast majority of police occurring locally, including 40 local governments with police departments, and many other communities with police powers that translate into the hiring of Village Police Officers; and

WHEREAS, it is also true that many local governments have been unable to identify the resources necessary to establish or strengthen local law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, in communities without local law enforcement, it is the responsibility of the State Troopers to deliver public safety, and the Department of Public Safety bears the costs of delivery of law enforcement in some of the most populated and the most remote areas of the state; and

WHEREAS, there is an inconsistent application of public safety in Alaska, which may not produce the desirable outcomes expected by residents or envisioned in the Constitution, and that inconsistency – where in most areas the State pays the entirety of the costs and lack of capacity may not ensure adequate law enforcement, while in others local governments pick up the entirety of the costs, save the State money in doing so, and are responsive to local public safety needs – is not fair to the State, nor local governments; and

WHEREAS, one way in which to address this while maintaining local control over the decision whether to take on police powers, or not, is for the State to establish a basic minimum resource obligation that it will provide to cities and boroughs in Alaska for law enforcement; and

WHEREAS, essentially, the Legislature may determine in statute a mechanism by which to establish the potential for a transfer of funds to a local government that has taken or takes on police powers and establishes adequate policing within its jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, this incentive should be consistent with variables that include total population and standards for officer per capita, and these can be thought of in terms of matching funds, as part of a community dividend, or added to Community Assistance, and may be scalable by need and over time.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Municipal League encourages the Legislature to develop a mechanism to incentivize and reimburse local governments for the implementation of police powers and provision of public safety on behalf of the State.