

March 25, 2014

The Honorable Pete Kelly
State Senate
Alaska State Capitol, Room 516
Juneau, AK 99801



Dear Senator Kelly:

As a Board Member of Fairbanks Resource Agency (FRA) and a 37 year Alaskan resident, I am writing in support of FRA's Capital Project Request of \$13,954,710, for the development and construction of a 30-bed assisted living home in Fairbanks, Alaska. The project will provide 24/7 professional care to seniors in need of assisted living services, including those diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.

Alaska has the nation's fastest growing senior population of those 65 or older, that's 13.6% of state residents. Fairbanks' aging population is the fastest in the state. Currently, there are approximately 185 assisted living beds in the Fairbanks area, with very few vacancies, yet the projected need for our seniors is an estimated 1,100-2,000 beds over the next two to five years. Where are our pioneers going to go?

Greater Fairbanks area families and Fairbanks Memorial Hospital are already struggling with locating out-of-home care for seniors. Increasingly, seniors must move to other Alaskan communities and out-of-state to find assisted living home services. The hospital reports that each week two to three seniors are being relocated outside the Fairbanks area as they are unable to be discharged to their homes and no local assisted living beds are available. Support and love from families, and the camaraderie of long time friendships is critical, especially as we age. Having to move hundreds of miles away from the Fairbanks area, or thousands of miles outside of Alaska, isn't acceptable. How frightening this is for our aging loved ones!

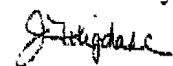
The critical shortage of quality assisted living facilities for Alaska's aging population is widely recognized, yet no solution to this growing public health crisis has come forward. Without the State's investment in the development of assisted living beds, the likelihood of an adequate availability of beds to meet the growing demand is uncertain at best. The cost of development and a slim profit margin have discouraged commercial investment for all but exclusively private pay facilities and does not offer a model that meets the needs of Alaska's seniors.

FRA is requesting funds to capitalize the construction of a 30-bed facility in Fairbanks and proposes a public/private partnership whereby FRA will assume future responsibility, including facility management, operations and staff. FRA has the experience, facility design, development strategy, operational and financial plan to achieve a sustainable assisted living home and a model that can be replicated in Fairbanks and across the state. **Through investment in the model, the State can anticipate a cost savings of approximately \$83,856 per bed/per year, as compared to the cost of an assisted living bed in the Pioneer Home, which currently has a five year waiting list in Fairbanks.**

As a former 25 year corporate philanthropic manager, I have studied and been very familiar with FRA's services for over 30 years and know that their proven record for quality service delivery, financial stability and commitment to providing services where needed makes them uniquely qualified to partner with the State of Alaska to provide assisted living facilities to keep our seniors in Fairbanks. Founded over 45 years ago to meet the needs of children, adults and seniors with disabling conditions, FRA currently employs over 400 employees who provide an array of services to over 650 people annually.

Won't you please help keep our seniors here in Fairbanks, close to their homes, loved ones and friends? Thank you in advance for supporting FRA's Capital Project Request and the public/private model that offers a viable solution to the critical health crisis affecting our Fairbanks area seniors today.

Most Sincerely,



Jeri Wigdahl