



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**SEISMIC HAZARDS
SAFETY COMMISSION**

Department of Natural Resources

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February 4, 2014

Sent via email

Senator Click Bishop
State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: Senate Bill No. 137

Dear Senator Bishop:

The Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission (ASHSC) sincerely appreciates and supports Senate Bill No. 137 as you introduced on January 24, 2014, which would extend the commission to June 30, 2020; six years from its current termination date on June 30, 2014. The ASHSC believes strongly that it is operating in the public's interest – as was concluded by the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee (LB&A) following their audit of the ASHSC in 2013. The six-year extension in SB137 will provide the ASHSC appropriate time to continue fulfilling its statutory (AS 44.37.067) powers and duties on behalf of the Governor, Legislature, local governments, as well as public and private sectors.

As stated the ASHSC's letter to the LB&A on November 4, 2013, the ASHSC concurred with all the comments and recommendations in the Division of Legislative Audit's (DLA) *Preliminary Report* (dated September 19, 2013). Further, the ASHSC has already addressed and initiated practices to implement all four of the DLA's recommendations. In particular, the ASHSC: (i) revised and updated its *Strategic Plan* (refining the scope, priorities and metrics of the specific strategies listed to achieve the ASHSC's seven overarching objectives); (ii) updated its general operating rules (e.g. basic member and officer responsibilities, procedures for active cooperation with Boards and Commission in the Office of the Governor to assure timely replacement of vacancies, business and meetings protocol, etc.); and (iii) established standards for preparing and implementing designated policy recommendations.

SB137 will allow the ASHSC to continue work on several major efforts already underway, intended to mitigate the seismic risk in Alaska, including:

- *Identifying and prioritizing the seismically vulnerable schools and public buildings in Alaska (e.g. To investigate the possible scale of this concern, the ASHSC is currently working with the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Response to facilitate a pilot project to utilize FEMA's updated 'rapid visual screening method' as a means to qualify to potential number and vulnerability of public school buildings to earthquake damage in a sampling of areas across the state. Additionally, the ASHSC has started to amass an inventory of state-funded projects over the past few years that involved assessment of the seismic vulnerability of existing public schools);*

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- *Completing a scenario earthquake study to qualify the seismic risk to the built environment at the City of Kodiak and adjacent areas for the Kodiak Island Borough;*
- *Advocating for Alaska earthquake research programs (e.g. identifying and characterizing earthquake sources; mapping seismic hazards, such earthquake-induced ground failure and landslide potential; tsunami inundation modeling; earthquake warning systems, etc.); and,*
- *Amending State regulations and departmental practices to (i) assure an appropriate level of understanding of Alaska earthquakes and knowledge of seismic engineering for registered civil and structural engineers; and (ii) assure more timely adoption of the seismic design provisions in new building codes.*

In closing, the ASHSC fully supports SB137, and looks forward to continuing our service to the government, private, and public sectors in Alaska. I will welcome the opportunity to testify on behalf of the ASHSC's at any legislative committee hearing where it is to be discussed. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Respectively yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Scher', with a stylized, flowing script.

Robert L. Scher, P.E.

Chair, Alaska Seismic Hazards Safety Commission
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