



February 2, 2017

Senator Stevens
Alaska State Capitol
Room 429
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens

I am contacting you today to provide testimony for **SB7, establishing a museum construction grant program**. Research shows that almost half of all museums in the state are either currently involved in a construction project or will be in the next five years. That is incredible... this bill provides the structure for establishing a systematic approach to prioritizing museum capital project funding requests in the state.

Museums and cultural organizations in Alaska are a critical part of the educational and economic infrastructure, spurring tourism and partnering with schools to teach the local curriculum. They contribute to our economy and wellbeing by:

- Employing over 260 Alaskans;
- Spend over \$23,553,294. annually in the State;
- Host over 624,695 visitors annually; and
- Server over 36,290 school children annually.

Despite this vital role of museums, our facilities and collections are at risk through decreasing federal, local and charitable giving. As collection grow and visitation increases, the pressure on our aging infrastructure must be managed. The **Valdez Museum & Historical Archive** is no stranger to this dilemma. The **Valdez Museum & Historical Archive** has accomplished a lot within the past few years: incorporating a successful expanded range of public programming, major upgrades to several exhibits, increasing its visitation, and raising its standards of collection management. Despite these achievements, the institution is now at a point in which its progress is being hampered by limitations of space. In order to maintain and improve its standards of professionalism, and to preserve its vision for the future, the organization needs to move away from its current environment of shared-purpose space and move towards a facility with dedicated space designed for single-use functionality.

At the core of our mission is education. Over the years we have had numerous teachers

Valdez Museum
SB 7 Letter of Support
Page 2.

share their gratitude for how the Valdez Museum supports their work. Recently, Sheri Beck, a 4th grade teacher with the Valdez City Schools shared with our Museum Educator,

"I just returned from a National Social Studies Convention in New Orleans. I thought of you so many times and wished we could be brainstorming side by side! I was also reminded how fortunate we are in Valdez, and in my partnership with you, to have our local museum available for help and support. Thank you! Your recent lesson with my students using artifacts and primary sources was such a wonderful example of what we heard at the conference as stellar teaching."

Without the proper care and housing of the Museum's collections we would not be able to offer robust education programs.

Thank you for sponsoring SB7, establishing a museum construction grant program, so that museums throughout the state of Alaska may continue to serve their communities. Help us make this bill a reality, speak up for Alaska's museums!

Sincerely,



Patricia Relay,
Executive Director

CC: Senator Bishop, Senator Egan, Senator Stedman, Representative Parish, Representative Ortiz.