



March 11, 2020

The Honorable Representative Bart LeBon
State Capital Room 418
Juneau, Alaska 99801

RE: HB 268

Dear Representative LeBon:

Chugachmiut is a regional tribal health organization that provides services to Port Graham, Nanwalek, Chenega, Tatitlek, Seward, Valdez and Cordova. Chugachmiut is the *sole provider* of health services in Port Graham, Nanwalek, Tatitlek and Chenega and operates a regional 'hub' clinic in Seward. *Everyone* in Seward and adjacent communities are eligible for certain services and a number of the citizens do access services provided by Chugachmiut.

After a pre-application phase, Chugachmiut was one of *ten entities nationwide* invited to submit a full application to the highly competitive Indian Health Service Joint Venture Construction Program (IHS-JV) to build a new health clinic in Seward. Under an IHS-JV agreement, a tribe or tribal health organization will acquire or construct a facility, using non-IHS funds. In exchange, Congress will appropriate staffing and operations dollars to the health care facility under a no-cost, 20-year lease. With the exception of a rare congressional appropriation directly to a tribe or tribal organization, this is the only path we have for increasing IHS dollars for the services we provide. This is the reason the IHS-JV is so intensely competitive when the opportunity opens on an average five-year cycle.

There is the obvious benefit to the City of Seward, to the Chugach Region, and to the State of Alaska in the form of a sizeable infusion of federal dollars, in new jobs and reduced unemployment rates, but most important to Chugachmiut, we have an opportunity to enhance direct health services and improve the health and outcomes for many, many people.

We extend our appreciation of your sponsorship of H.B. 268 and fully support your efforts to improve every regional health organization's ability to enhance the delivery of services to Alaskans. Much of our ability to expand services is contingent on our minimizing facility costs in order to steer those dollars into direct services. H.B. 268 has an enormous potential to significantly maximize the funds we would otherwise be paying to commercial banks or investors outside the State of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Angela J. Vanderpool, Executive Director