



Anchorage Community Land Trust

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 29, 2021
RE: HR 8 – House Poverty and Opportunity Task Force

Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today in support of House Resolution 8, “Creating the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity.” The Anchorage Community Land Trust’s work, since the organization’s founding in 2004, has been focused on economic opportunity, community development, and poverty alleviation in Anchorage’s urban neighborhoods. HR 8’s creation of a task force providing reports and policy recommendation would further economic resilience and opportunity in our communities.

The Anchorage Community Land Trust (ACLT) is an economic development nonprofit working in urban nonprofit neighborhoods such as Mountain View, Fairview, Spenard, Muldoon, and Downtown Anchorage. Our toolkit includes commercial real estate redevelopment, community organizing, working with neighbors to improve community assets, and targeted programs such as Set Up Shop and Grow North Farm. Most of the communities we work in have unemployment rates and poverty rates many times the city-wide rate, and most of these communities are also federally designated Opportunity Zones.

Through our history and track record of work in these communities, we know that there are pervasive inequities in access to resources. For instance, although the statewide poverty rate in 2019 was 10.1%, the poverty rate in Mountain View was 35.8%, and was a staggering 55.8% for Alaska Native community members. There is a critical need for targeted resources to improve economic opportunity in these neighborhoods. This bill will convene a non-partisan, diverse, and intersectional task force of experts to provide informational reports and policy recommendations relating to poverty alleviation in our state.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated these trends, causing deep financial instability and devastation in Alaska. Through our Set Up Shop program, we have supported hundreds of small business owners, providing outreach and technical assistance to help them access city, state, and federal resources. We have seen firsthand the painful impacts of COVID-19 for community residents and neighborhood entrepreneurs. We need to find new solutions that will alleviate the struggling of our most marginalized Alaskans and expand economic opportunities in our state.

In closing, we strongly support HR 8’s creation of a task force on poverty and opportunity, along with your leadership and advocacy for our communities. Thank you,

Kirk Rose
CEO, Anchorage Community Land Trust

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 22, 2021

RE: HR 8 – House Poverty and Opportunity Task Force

Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today to express my support for House Resolution 8, “Creating the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity.” This bill will convene a non-partisan, diverse, and intersectional task force of experts to provide informational reports and policy recommendations relating to poverty alleviation in our state.

Although the statewide poverty rate is slightly lower for Alaska as compared to the national average, poverty affects our BIPOC community at much higher rates. For instance, although the statewide poverty rate in 2019 was 10.1%, the poverty rate for African American people in Alaska was 14.2% and the poverty rate for Alaska Native people was 24%. In other words, the burden of poverty in our state is largely held by our communities of color, making this a racial equity issue in addition to an economic opportunity issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exacerbated these trends, causing deep financial instability and devastation in Alaska. Thousands of Alaskans lost their jobs, and many are still unemployed or underemployed as a result. The likely loss of another major summer tourist season will only deepen this financial strain and unfortunately, increase poverty in our state. We need to find new solutions that will alleviate the struggling of our most marginalized Alaskans and expand economic opportunities in our state.

HR 8 and its proposed legislative task force will be a major boon, not just to our policymakers who will now have up-to-date information regarding poverty post-COVID, but to all of the nonprofit organizations who also participate in direct service provision. Having a report and recommendations from a group of experts will assist our villages, cities, and state make informed decisions to lift us out of this crisis.

HR 8 also convenes a diverse team of experts, ensuring that a wide variety of voices is heard. In addition to government officials and legislators, representatives of many different stakeholders (nonprofits, members of the public with lived experience, faith leaders, elder advocates, etc) will have a seat at the table. As a result, I am confident in the recommendations that this group will present to our elected officials.

In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has been involved the formation of this bill, and I appreciate Rep. Tarr for being a staunch advocate for our most marginalized community members. I urge all our legislators to support HR 8 for the benefit of all Alaskans!

Sincerely,

Joyce Song

Representative Geran Tarr
Alaska State Capitol
Room 128
Juneau, AK 99801

April 21, 2021

RE: HR 8 – House Poverty and Opportunity Task Force

Representative Tarr,

I am writing to you today to express my support for House Resolution 8, “Creating the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity.” This bill will convene a non-partisan, diverse, and intersectional task force of experts to provide informational reports and policy recommendations relating to poverty alleviation in our state.

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In closing, I am grateful for everyone who has been involved the formation of this bill, and I appreciate Rep. Tarr for being a staunch advocate for our most marginalized community members. I urge all our legislators to support HR 8 for the benefit of all Alaskans!

Sincerely,
Maya Lapinski



April 29, 2021

Representative Tarr
Room 128, State Capitol Building
State Capitol Building
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: House Resolution No. 8, Creating the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity

Dear Representative Tarr:

The Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. (RurAL CAP) fully supports House Resolution 8 which calls for the creation of a House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity.

As the only Community Action Agency in Alaska, RurAL CAP operates with a mission of empowering low-income Alaskans through advocacy, education, affordable housing, and direct services that respect our unique values and cultures. Founded in 1965, we have advocated for and with low-income Alaskans for over 55 years.

While progress has been made, Alaska has not recently re-examined its policies for addressing poverty. Our neighbor to the south, Washington State, has done so and their findings are instructive: they recognize both inequality and historical trauma as root causes of poverty, and they have adopted strategies for addressing each. We believe that HR 8 can serve as a foundation for having a similar conversation.

We support our fellow 80,000 Alaskans who live with poverty and the additional 70,000 Alaskans who benefit from federal and state programs that help alleviate poverty. In 2019, 10.1 percent of Alaskans lived in poverty with the highest impacts being experienced by Alaska Native communities and people of color, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how precarious life is not only for low-income Alaskans but also for many who were previously well-employed and, through no fault of their own, suffered the loss of employment or experienced a catastrophe they do not have resources to address.

The great work done through three successive decades of the Healthy Alaskans state health improvement plan demonstrates how difficult change is to achieve. A substantial barrier to success has been a lack of focus on root causes and adequate, sustainable funding. However, recent federal policy changes will make it easier to address poverty.



RurAL CAP hopes, through HR 8, that Alaska will engage in this critical dialogue together.

We are optimistic that HR 8 will call appropriate attention to the current gaps in services and the lack of statewide coordination in addressing poverty through the state budgetary process and the support of critical social programming. As the Alaska Legislature meets to discuss the state budget, further cuts to social aid would adversely impact the most vulnerable and marginalized Alaskans while creating additional strain on low-income populations.

RurAL CAP thanks you, Representative Foster, and Representative Hopkins for creating and promoting this visionary and compassionate resolution.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc.
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907-279-2511
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