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Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

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RE: SB 97 and HB 120

AML appreciates the Governor's interest in strengthening the State's ability to foster economic development by leveraging State lands. We believe that this can be done consistent with local government planning and zoning authorities, which helps to avoid dual systems that would have resulted in lower property values, insufficient infrastructure, and conflict between property owners.

Over the course of the last few years, AML organized a series of cooperative meetings with DNR officials that have led to substantive and meaningful change. Through a collaborative process, local planners, municipal attorneys, and economic development professionals worked together to identify solutions. This brainstorming effort resulted in a short list of ways that local governments and the State could work together to achieve this goal of developing Alaska's lands.

There are some key considerations:

- Consistent planning between landowners, and requirements for and within a development.
- Expectations of the State's ability to provide adequate infrastructure in its development.
- Improve communication and cooperation by including local governments in agency review.

SB97 and HB120 are reflective of the work that we put in, even as there remain long-term goals of stronger partnerships between levels of government. We understand that the State's intent in these bills is to maintain current law related to recognizing and respecting local planning and zoning processes as part of the State's planning process, including in its release of land for commercial development. We hope that the final version will reflect the economic development goals of the State while ensuring that local authorities have a role in facilitating the State's efforts.

There are important provisions in these current bills worth emphasizing. First, increasing the receipt authority of the lands' development, so that as subdivision or development occurs, the State is able to meet the requirements for access and utility infrastructure required of local development. Second, local governments can treat State development the same as private development, ensuring single-level expectations that don't discriminate between developers. The State can follow local ordinances knowing that there is that fair treatment in place. Specifically, we are supportive of the language found in Section 2, lines 26 and 27, and compliance with municipal zoning and subdivision control ordinances.

Together we can ensure that State efforts are successful, and that development not only occurs but results in increased property valuation with benefits to local economies. AML appreciates the collaboration with DNR, the work of legislative committees, and the interest of the State in working with us to achieve significant progress in developing Alaska's lands.

Sincerely,

Nils Andreassen
Executive Director