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April 8, 2026

Mike Sfraga, Interim Chancellor  
University of Alaska Board of Regents

Dear Chancellor Sfraga and Board of Regents:

I am President of the Linguistic Society of America, a national organization representing those working in the field of linguistics within academia, industry, government, and nonprofit sectors. I am also a professor teaching in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Washington. As someone who has spent my entire career in higher education, I understand that these are challenging times, and university leaders are increasingly called upon to make difficult decisions and choices. I ask that you and the other UAF leaders please consider the following points before finalizing plans that will impact the Alaskan Native Language Center (ANLC). It has come to our attention that there are members of the UAF community who believe that the university is taking actions that will negatively impact staffing, instruction and access in ways that are critical to its mission and function. These include: cutting the ANLC's limited staff, eliminating the publishing arm of the ANLC, and ending access to its Archives.

The LSA is deeply committed to the vitality of Alaska's Indigenous languages and to the health of UAF's Alaskan Native Language Center. The ANLC is a unique institution representing the State of Alaska's core commitments to the Indigenous communities on whose lands it was established. The ANLC was established as part of the legal structure governing the University of Alaska (AS Sec. 14.40.117) as part of an effort to redress the historical suppression of Alaska Native Languages by the federal and state governments. The text of the law reads:

*The University of Alaska shall establish an Alaska Native Language Center, the purposes of which are to*

- (1) study languages native to Alaska;*
- (2) develop literacy materials;*
- (3) assist in the translation of important documents;*
- (4) provide for the development and dissemination of Alaska Native literature; and*
- (5) train Alaska Native language speakers to work as teachers and aides in bilingual classrooms.*

The ANLC has been instrumental in conducting research to produce curricula for bilingual education in rural Alaskan schools, which for decades has been a lifeline for Alaska Native languages. It has done so by bringing together scholars, students, and community members,

including many speakers of Alaska Native languages, in a close collaboration in a way that has become the model globally. It has inspired centers such as the Yukon Native Language Centre, the California Language Archive, and the Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America. Its research, teaching, archives, and publications remain critical to language revitalization programs in the state.

Part of the Alaska Native Language Center's mission is the maintenance of its Alaska Native Language Archive (ANLA), a collection of recordings, manuscripts, fieldnotes, and other materials that constitutes by far the largest record of Alaska Native languages in the world. It provides high-quality resources to Native communities as well as support for academic research at the highest level. Its resources have enabled communities across Alaska to develop their own grassroots language revitalization efforts. They have also attracted world-class scholars to Alaska. The ANLC is central to the University of Alaska Fairbanks' fulfillment of its larger mission, including emphasizing the circumpolar North and its diverse peoples. Therefore, preservation and staffing of the ANLA is fundamental to the mission of the ANLC as well as the University of Alaska itself.

The Alaska Native Language Center's publications program is recognized as a leader in publishing on indigenous languages with a catalogue that ranges from dictionaries and reference grammars to early readers and language exercises, to great works of written and oral literature. Production of high-quality publications and making them accessible to communities and to the public is core to the mission of the ANLC.

In short, maintenance of the ANLC's archives, continued publication of critical language resources, and expansion of course offerings and indigenous language degree programs are critical to the core missions of the center. Funding the ANLC will help to ensure that the University of Alaska Fairbanks fulfills its commitment to serve Alaska's Native people and their intellectual heritage.

The LSA is strongly in support of fully funding the activities, staffing, courses and Archives of the Alaska Native Language Center.

Sincerely,

***Alicia Beckford Wassink***

LSA President  
Professor of Linguistics  
University of Washington, Seattle

Cc:  
Senator Loki Tobin and staff  
Christine Resler, Chair of Audit and Finance Committee