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

April 28, 2026

Members of the House State Affairs Committee,

On behalf of the Alaska Municipal League, representing Alaska's 165 local governments, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss HB 379.

HB 379 is a modest but important step toward restoring local control in how boroughs organize and deliver essential services such as roads, fire protection, and parks, preserving the fundamental principle that voters must approve changes affecting them.

Under current law, even when residents are willing to organize, tax themselves, and meet service standards, they can still be prevented from joining or forming a service area because of existing statutory approval requirements. Over time, this can create unnecessary barriers to local decision-making, lock in inefficient service boundaries, and make it harder for municipalities to respond to community needs.

HB 379 helps municipalities deliver essential services more efficiently by removing unnecessary statutory barriers. In particular, it provides a more flexible framework for second class boroughs by allowing certain service areas created after July 1, 2026, to be altered, consolidated, or replaced without requiring separate approval from each existing service area.

Importantly, the bill does not eliminate voter involvement. It strikes a reasonable balance by preserving voter approval for affected residents while reducing duplicative approvals that can prevent willing communities from acting in their own best interest.

From AML's perspective, HB 379 reflects three important principles: local control and self-determination, efficiency and cost effectiveness, and practical governance for second class boroughs. At a broader level, HB 379 reflects AML's goal of ensuring that local governments—not state statute—drive local service delivery decisions. The bill modernizes service area governance while maintaining appropriate public accountability.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nils Andreassen", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nils Andreassen  
Executive Director