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

## Testimony of the Alaska Municipal League

Before the Alaska State Legislature

In Support of House Joint Resolution No. 5

April 7, 2025

### Introduction

Honorable Members of the Alaska State Legislature,

The Alaska Municipal League (AML) appreciates the opportunity to present testimony in strong support of House Joint Resolution No. 5 (HJR 5), which urges the United States Congress and the President to reinstate the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (SRS) and to make its funding mechanism permanent.

In 2019, AML adopted Resolution 2020-10, emphasizing the critical importance of the SRS program to Alaska's municipalities. This resolution highlighted that 61% of Alaska's land is federally owned, with 57% managed for preservation and conservation, limiting development opportunities. The SRS program was established to offset declines in timber revenues, providing essential funding for schools, road maintenance, and public safety in affected communities.

The expiration of the SRS program has had profound negative effects on Alaska's rural communities:

- **Financial Shortfalls:** In fiscal year 2023, Alaska received over \$12.6 million from SRS. The cessation of these funds will lead to significant budget deficits in municipalities such as Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Sitka, and Yakutat.
- **Educational Challenges:** School districts have been compelled to consider staff reductions, increased class sizes, and the elimination of programs, directly impacting the quality of education. For instance, the City and Borough of Wrangell anticipated a \$800,000 shortfall, primarily affecting school funding.
- **Infrastructure Deterioration:** The loss of SRS funding has hindered essential infrastructure maintenance, including road repairs and public safety services, exacerbating challenges in communities already facing harsh environmental conditions.

Recognizing the urgency of this issue, the Alaska House of Representatives passed HJR 5 with a 35-4 vote, urging Congress to reinstate and permanently fund the SRS program. Communities including Petersburg, Wrangell, Ketchikan, Juneau, and Craig have expressed strong support for this resolution.

The Alaska Municipal League respectfully urges the Alaska State Legislature to advocate for the reinstatement and permanent funding of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act. The continuation of this program is vital to ensuring the sustainability and prosperity of Alaska's rural communities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.