



Fairbanks North Star Borough

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March 22, 2012

The Honorable Cathy Munoz, Chair
House Community and Regional Affairs Committee
Alaska State Capitol, Room 403
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for HB 366, Disaster Planning and Services

Dear Chair Munoz:

Thank you for introducing HB 366, a bill to establish a comprehensive Intrastate Mutual Aid System (IMAS) that would allow all political subdivisions to transcend their jurisdictional boundaries to receive and render aid to other political subdivisions in the event of disasters and emergencies. The Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly identified intrastate mutual aid legislation as one of its legislative priorities in 2010, therefore, the Borough is pleased to offer our support of HB 366. We believe that this legislation is good public policy that will provide for a consistent and integrated mutual aid system to ensure an effective response in disaster situations.

The 2009 ice jam flooding, which devastated communities located along the Yukon River, demonstrated a critical need for an intrastate mutual aid system. The Fairbanks North Star Borough provided fire apparatus to City of Eagle after that community's fire station was submerged during the flooding. Borough emergency management staff assisted with sheltering a planeload of evacuated elders and children from a Yukon River village. These communities are geographically isolated from the Borough and, therefore, mutual aid agreements with these communities did not exist. The myriad of issues that have arisen with regard to authorities, compensation, liability, and the ability to provide timely assistance, as a result of the Yukon River flooding response clearly demonstrates the value of having agreements and procedures in place long before a disaster occurs. The establishment of an intrastate mutual aid system framework as proposed by HB 366 will substantially close this gap.

Disasters know no political boundaries. They can happen at any time, in any place, and to anyone. HB 366 provides an integrated and structured framework to provide efficient and effective emergency aid and relief to all Alaskan residents when disaster strikes. Thank you for your consideration and support of HB 366.

Sincerely,

Mayor Luke Hopkins