

February 3, 2017

Senator Gary Stevens  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 429  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Senator Stevens,

I am a member of Museums Alaska a statewide association of Alaska's museum professionals who work to provide opportunities and improvements for Alaskan Museums and Cultural Centers. I am the Director of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. I am in full support of SB7, a bill that will create a Museum Construction and Matching Grant program.

Gov. Bill Walker issued a proclamation designating 2017 as a "Year of History and Heritage" in recognition of Alaska's sesquicentennial — the 150th year since Russia ceded its possessions and interests in Alaska to the United States. Gov. Walker's proclamation encourages all Alaskans "to study, teach, reflect upon our past, and apply its lessons to a brighter, more inclusive future."

In Alaska we have over 65 museums, cultural centers, historic houses and sites in operation. Rooted in their communities, they are anchor institutions that deliver education services, research opportunities, exhibit local art and culture; provide public programs, and generate revenue through cultural tourism. Most of these institutions are in buildings never intended to be museums.

In 2014 the McDowell Group completed an Infrastructure Needs Study of Alaska Museums and Capital Improvement Planning Guide for the Foraker Group. This information demonstrates critical infrastructure needs for our institutions that collect and care for public trust collections. Of the 36 museums contacted, 27 or 75% identified significant capital improvement needs within the next five years. Exhibition space expansion or improvement; increase in facility size; collections storage expansion; and security improvements are rated among the top four priorities for these institutions and specialized needs for collections. The report states that staff can be tasked with raising funds "at least 10 times larger than a museum's annual budget," while working on collections care, exhibits, programs, education, and regular business related to generating revenue to operate.

SB7 is a zero fiscal note bill that will create a pathway for capital improvement projects when funding becomes available. Future capital funding requests can be ranked by the Department of Community and Regional Affairs subject to appropriation of funding through the legislative process. This grant program awards up to 50 percent of proposed costs to help build, expand, or renovate existing facilities. It does not create dependency on the state for funding; it does provide a smart framework in which to develop eligible shovel-ready projects if funding becomes available.

Like the successful library construction grant program, SB7 encourages resourcefulness, partnering, and thoughtful community planning. If this bill is in place it allows the State of Alaska to receive federal infrastructure monies should they become available. It can encourage efficient and cost-effective energy usage in planning. We can encourage forward thinking with sustainable energy initiatives and systems analysis for renovations and new buildings.

Our Museum worked persistently for ten years to fund a ventilation and humidity retrofit for our historic building. These specialized environments are essential for best practices collection care and care of our wooden artifacts such as a rare fish trap, canoe, and other collections. Before our new system was put in place we were operating with the original 1951 oil fired-boiler. Our new all-electric air-source heat pump system has eliminated the need for oil, uses renewable energy and saves us about \$10,000 annually on heating costs while adding humidification, de-humidification and cooling into our Museum environment.

Advancing SB7 to establish a construction and matching grant program is an effective framework to support current and growing capital needs of Alaskan museums as state and local economies improve and capital funding becomes available. I look forward to providing information and answering any questions that you may have. Thank you for your public service.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Lindsey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jane Lindsey

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CC Senator Dennis Egan, Senator Bert Stedman, Senator Click Bishop  
CC Representative Justin Parish; Representative Dan Ortiz