



February 28, 2020

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Chair
Representative Bryce Edgmon, Vice Chair
House Tribal Affairs
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Zulkosky and Vice Chair Edgmon,

Alaska Tribal Unity (ATU) supports HB 287 *Village Public Safety Officer Grants*, in which the State of Alaska legislature is seeking to update VPSO statutes to improve the program so that contractors can better serve their regions' public safety needs.

ATU was established in November 2016 as an assembly of tribes for the purpose of developing a unified voice to advocate on important issues that affect Alaska tribes. The mission of ATU is to develop a tribal alliance committed to enhancing and protecting sovereignty, self determination, and quality of life for Alaska Natives through advocacy with a unified voice.

The Joint Legislative VPSO Working Group held a hearing at ATU's 4th Annual Gathering. Tribal leaders spoke passionately about the lack of public safety and ways to improve the VPSO program. President Joel Jackson of Organized Village of Kake says it best when he stated, "We are the ones being affected by not having meaningful law enforcement. We are the ones dealing with deaths."

The tribal leaders then passed resolution 2019-06 Call on the State of Alaska to Provide Equal Public Safety Protection to Alaska Tribes as Mandated by the State Constitution. HB 287 contains provisions supported by tribal leaders in this resolution, including the financial flexibility of funds so contractors can structure the VPSO program as necessary for their region, eliminate unfunded mandates, and permit funding from other revenues sources for bonuses to help recruitment and retention of VPSO officers, among other provision. ATU sees HB 287 as an initial step toward improving public safety for tribes in rural Alaska.

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Will Mayo
Executive Director

