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

Senator Click Bishop, Co-Chair  
Senator Bert Stedman, Co-Chair  
Senate Finance Committee

April 21, 2021

RE: AML input for CSSB 97 (RES)

The Governor proposed an Alaska lands bill last legislative session that attempted to give DNR more ability to transfer lands to private development. Unfortunately, last year's version proposed to do this by stripping local governments of their platting and planning authority, setting up dual systems that would have resulted in lower property values, insufficient infrastructure, and conflict between property owners. AML's members objected to that bill; it found little support in the Legislature.

Since then, AML has organized a series of cooperative meetings with DNR officials – and appreciate DNR's initiation of a "let's talk" approach – that have led to substantive and meaningful change. We began by identifying the principal motivation. We quickly agreed that there is common cause in getting Alaska lands into Alaskans' hands.

Through a collaborative process, local planners, municipal attorneys, and economic development professionals worked together to identify solutions. This brainstorming effort resulted in a short list of ways that local governments and the State could work together to achieve this goal of developing Alaska's lands.

There are some key considerations:

- Consistent planning between landowners, and single levels of authority for requirements within a development, emphasizing local control.
- There are some basic expectations of the State's ability to provide adequate infrastructure in its development of subdivisions, including access roads and utilities.
- There are improvements that would benefit both levels of government in how information is shared, communication occurs, and relationships should be strengthened.

Ultimately, we made progress. SB97 is reflective of the work that we put in. We believe it achieves the aims of the State while ensuring that local authorities have a role in facilitating the State's efforts.

There are important provisions worth emphasizing. First, increasing the receipt authority of the lands' development, so that as subdivision or development occurs, the State is able to meet the requirements for access and utility infrastructure required of local development. Second, local governments can treat State development the same as private development, ensuring single-

level expectations that don't discriminate between developers. The State can follow local ordinances knowing that there is that fair treatment in place. Specifically, we are supportive of the language found in Section 2, lines 26 and 27, and compliance with municipal zoning ordinances, and subdivision control ordinances.

Together we can ensure that State efforts are successful, and that development not only occurs but results in increased property valuation, and economic development. AML appreciates the collaboration with DNR and the interest of the State in working with us to achieve significant progress in developing Alaska's lands.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Nils Andreassen', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nils Andreassen  
Executive Director

Copy: Miles Baker, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor  
Brandon Brefczynski, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor