



January 30, 2024

Senator James D. Kaufman
Representative Stanley Wright

RE: Support for SB 205 and HB 292, AHFC Authority to Acquire Building

Dear Senator Kaufman and Representative Wright:

The demand for affordable housing statewide is acute, but so is our need to maintain our 30-year+ investments to achieve our vision of "Independence through Housing".

Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) owns and/or operates ~1,700 affordable rental units and has built 80 affordable, single-family homes for immediate homeownership. Additionally, our agency administers a Weatherization Program that provides residential upgrades and creates healthier and more energy efficient homes in the community.

COVID-19 challenged our organization's ability to meet the needs of our staff and our rental units. The supply chain tightened. Our workforce was asked first to avoid the interior of our residents' homes so as not to come into contact or share the virus. Later, our workforce had to respond to the backlog of regular and unexpected maintenance emergencies with fewer staff to do this work due to workforce challenges still facing us today. On top of it, we noticed increased incidents of vandalism at our properties and theft of critical tools.

This context is important as we think about our friends at Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) who are challenged to meet the needs of housing their agency owns in 16 communities. We applaud their interest in acquiring 700 Bragaw Street as a maintenance hub and their vision to create a usable training space for our collective workforce.

Part of our role at CIHA is giving our clients a "hand up," and an opportunity to move people to their own potential for economic empowerment.

Providing AHFC with legislative authority to purchase the facility near Penland Park in Anchorage will, from our similar experience, give them a hand up. The building will support a streamlined operation that allows AHFC to be more responsive to its tenants while also creating a better environment for its employees – the ones who didn't get to work from home, the ones who show up to shovel sidewalks when seemingly everyone else gets a snow day, and the ones who are often a trusted first contact with an Alaska elder when they call to say the furnace isn't functioning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gabriel Layman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Gabriel Layman
President/CEO