



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

Department of  
Health and Social Services

ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

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March 12, 2019

Senator Natasha von Imhof  
Senate Finance Committee Co-Chair  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 516  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Senator Bert Stedman  
Senate Finance Committee Co-Chair  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 518  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Subject: SB 19, Capital Budget

Dear Chair Imhof, Chair Stedman, and Senate Finance Committee Members:

The Alaska Commission on Aging appreciates the opportunity to provide comment and offers the following recommendations on SB 19, the Capital Budget.

**Public and Community Transportation State Match, Department of Transportation:** Safe, accessible, and affordable transportation options are essential for older Alaskans and people with disabilities so that they are able to access medical care, get to their job and volunteer placements, and to participate in community life. Transportation is consistently identified as a top priority for seniors in senior surveys and elder-senior listening sessions conducted by the Commission. Community nonprofit organizations use the state's public and community transportation funds to leverage federal funding for local transit systems to meet match requirements for federal transit grant applications. These grants, awarded through a competitive process, generate an estimated \$3 to \$4 return on the State's investment. Grantees are required to contribute at least a 20% match.

**Recommendation: Please maintain funding for projects that serve the transportation needs of seniors and other vulnerable Alaskans and restore the \$1 million general fund dollars for Public and Community Transportation State Match in SB 19, the Capital Budget.**

**Emergency Medical Services Match for Project Code Blue, Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health:** The Code Blue project was established ten years ago to assist rural communities in their efforts to update their aging emergency medical equipment and provide medical staff training by leveraging limited state dollars with funding from other resources. The primary purpose of emergency medical services is to provide immediate medical care to people who need it most without which, heart attacks, strokes, and accidents would increase the risk of fatality. These services are particularly important for critically ill and injured persons, as well as older persons with health problems who are among the most vulnerable. Maintaining essential equipment for rural emergency medical services is critical for the health and safety of rural residents during emergency situations and when natural disasters occur. This equipment is expensive and without the required match funding, rural and remote communities with limited funds will be hard-pressed to afford.

**Recommendation: Please restore funding in the amount of \$500,000 for the Emergency Medical Services Match for Project Code Blue in SB 19 to protect health and safety, improve health outcomes, and further access to emergency care.**

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund (SCHDF):** Access to safe, quality, and affordable housing is a powerful social determinant of health, which when combined with appropriate home and community-based services, allows seniors to live longer in the community and thereby controls the growth of long-term care spending. From 2001 to 2019 the SCHDF, when used in combination with other AHFC financing

tools, resulted in an average of 79 new senior housing units constructed annually, for a total production of 1,508 new senior housing units statewide (AHFC Senior Housing Office, March 2019). While SCHDF is not solely responsible for these units, it is likely that the overall count of new senior housing units would be much less without the SCHDF funds to leverage other sources. In addition, the SCHDF provides funding for the *Senior Access Program* of which 21 seniors (age 55+) utilized this program in FY2018 to make accessibility improvements to their homes, extending their ability to live independently in the community.

**Recommendation: Please maintain the Governor’s recommendation in the amount of \$1.75 million for the SCHDF as proposed in SB 19.**

The Alaska Commission on Aging appreciates your thoughtful consideration of these capital budget items in SB 19 that impact services used by vulnerable Alaskans, including seniors and persons with disabilities. Thank you for consideration of these comments. Please contact Denise Daniello, ACoA’s Executive Director, at 465-4879 or [denise.daniello@alaska.gov](mailto:denise.daniello@alaska.gov) for further information.

Sincerely,



Gordon Glaser  
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello  
Executive Director, Alaska Commission on Aging

Cc: Senator Click Bishop  
Senator Lyman Hoffman  
Senator Peter Micciche  
Senator Mike Shower  
Senator David Wilson  
Senator Donald Olson  
Senator Bill Wielechowski