

Anchorage Assembly  
Municipal Clerk's Office  
632 W 6<sup>th</sup> Ave, Ste 250  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
[wwmas@anchorageak.gov](mailto:wwmas@anchorageak.gov)

Dear Anchorage Assembly:

**Thank you** for your continued strenuous efforts on behalf of our homeless neighbors. We share your commitment to making life better for every member of our community, particularly our most vulnerable, and it is a blessing to have strong governmental partners.

As our city refocuses on recovering from the devastating economic impact of the pandemic we know that demand for shelter services is certain to dramatically increase. Our community's soup kitchens and food security programs have seen record utilization over the past year, a leading indicator of shelter demand. Unemployment is high, summer tourism is not promising, and the economic headwinds make it clear that a shelter crisis is coming that will require the help of every single homeless service provider.

It is in this context, of needing every bed that we can muster, that we write to ask for a postponement of the proposed legislation requiring licensing of homeless shelters.

We share your desire for implementing best practices in our services, we recognize the need to be good neighbors to our community, and we fully support care coordination and data gathering. We are more than willing to recommit to partnering with you to improve on the above goals – coordinating our services, sharing data and best practices, and increasing our engagement with the residents who are our neighbors. We are happy to meet with you to discuss specific action items at your convenience.

We also appreciate your expressed intent that shelters be able to “operate with as much autonomy as is reasonably allowable.” Shelter operations, many of which are privately

funded and require countless hours of unpaid work to support, are fundamentally volunteer efforts. Volunteers, while naturally motivated to do the best they can, are easily demoralized by top down management efforts. We are very concerned that this effort at licensing will lead to a decrease in shelter supply at what promises to be a very critical time in our city.

There may come a time when shelter licensing is the right thing to do in Anchorage - and when it is we will be honored to work with you to set standards and best practices, leveraging our combined 100+ years of experience in the field. Unfortunately, that time is not now. Now is the time to grow our shelter capacity, help however we can, and work together to bring every Alaskan in from the cold.

Thank you again for all you have done, and have helped us do, for our homeless neighbors.

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Pastor John LaMantia  
Anchorage Gospel Rescue Mission

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Lisa Sauder  
Bean's Café

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Lt. Colonel Doug Tollerud  
The Salvation Army Alaska Div.

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*Sherrie Laurie*  
Sherrie Laurie  
Downtown Hope Center

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Alison Kear  
Covenant House