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July 2, 2019

The Honorable Cathy Giessel, Alaska State Senate

Dear Senate President Giessel,

On behalf of the U.S. Permafrost Association, a non-profit organization incorporated in Alaska, and its Alaskan and national memberships, I offer the following support for overturning Governor Dunleavy's veto of the state-funded portion of the university operating budget of \$130 million. Permafrost conditions exist in 80% of Alaskan land and significantly impact many aspects of daily life including: water supplies, food security, sanitation, construction, mining, transportation, and housing. Maintenance of local and regional Alaskan projects including the North Slope oil fields and Trans-Alaska Pipeline are significantly impacted by permafrost and future changing conditions. The extraordinary knowledge base and human resources pertaining to permafrost that currently exist in Alaska are in large part the results of past and on-going teaching and research faculties and facilities that exist on the Fairbanks and Anchorage campuses. The proposed budget reductions, if implemented, would cause an irreversible impact on the training, engineering, and research capabilities that are required to sustain Alaska's present and future economies. This would come at a time when warming and thawing of permafrost is accelerating and related mitigation techniques are required. Maintaining the University's ongoing contributions in engineering and science is critical to future economic development and resource management in Alaska.

The University of Alaska is fortunate to have experienced researchers and facilities to cope with many of the permafrost-related challenges facing Alaska's economies and environments. This is demonstrated by the approximately \$127 million of external funding (including federal) that annually come to the University through research grants. However, without matching funds, facilities, and other indirect University support, the Federal support would be greatly diminished or eliminated. The negative consequences of these cuts would greatly reduce collaboration between researchers and students from the lower 48 with UA colleagues. The proposed budget reductions will effectively eliminate the key educational programs needed to support future development in Alaska.

On behalf of our members, I urge the legislature to overturn the vetoed budget. The future existence of the University depends on your positive action, support, and leadership in consultations with your fellow legislators. If additional information about this critically important issue is required, please contact me or USPA members in our Alaskan communities.

Respectfully,

Dmitry Streletskiy
President, U.S. Permafrost Association