



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**

GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of  
Health and Social Services**

ALASKA PIONEER HOMES  
Pioneer Homes Advisory Board

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December 7, 2018

The Honorable Mike Dunleavy, Governor  
State of Alaska  
PO Box 110001  
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Dear Governor Dunleavy,

On behalf of the Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board (APHAB), please accept our sincerest congratulations on your successful election. In keeping with the APHAB's statutory obligations, this letter is to brief you on the current state of the division of Alaska Pioneer Homes as well as recommendations that we feel are crucial to the fulfillment of the division's mission, "Providing elder Alaskans a home and community, celebrating life through its final breath."

As a brief background, the APHAB was established in Alaska Statute 44.29.500 to be the link between Pioneer Home residents, the public and state policy makers. Per that statute, our primary purpose is to conduct annual inspections, tour the Pioneer Homes and associated properties, review the division's policies and procedures, and suggest recommendations to you based upon our findings.

After months of in-depth meetings with division staff and facility personnel, as well as in-person visits with Pioneer Home residents, the APHAB has formulated the following recommendations for your review.

### **Facility recommendations**

We strongly urge the State of Alaska to consider the aging infrastructure of the Pioneer Homes as a critical resource to Alaskan elders. The homes serve as a safety net for the aging population and is a vital part of the continuum of care in this great state. As such, the board makes the following proposals:

- Conduct a feasibility study of repair vs rebuild of the Fairbanks Pioneer Home (FPH) and explore partnerships for outside funding to pay for the study. The FPH was built in 1967 and is situated on 16 acres. Since construction of the home, the health care needs of elders entering the home continues to increase. The home was designed for low level assisted residential living and is not adequately configured to meet the changing needs of current elders, many of which require our highest level of care. The building is also not energy efficient, leading to large utility bills.
- Replacement of the Alaska Veterans & Pioneer Home (AVPH) roof. This project has been on the deferred maintenance list for many years. The federal government has recently funded a significant increase to The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for construction projects across the country. This is an ideal time to explore the federal 65/35 construction match grant to offset cost to the state.

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- Review deferred maintenance list and start planning to address concerns. All six of the Pioneer Homes across the state are aging and in need of repair/renovation. Since the downturn of the economy many capital and deferred maintenance needs have not been accomplished. This practice is causing our already aging facilities to not be cared for in a manner that keeps up with their needs, which may cause additional unintended cost to the state.

### **Operations Recommendations**

The Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes has taken the lead in exploring cost efficiency measures and identifying ways to maximize their benefit to meet the increasing need of elder care in the state. The board supports the division in these efforts and makes the following proposals:

- Development of an implementation strategy for the Staffing Plan and Cost Impact Analysis report recommendations. Collaborate with outside sources to fund the creation of a division management plan to guide the future success and continued quality improvement of the Pioneer Home system.
- Adjust baseline minimum qualifications to make it easier to recruit entry level positions and find efficiencies to streamline the hiring process.
- Make activities for elders a priority in the homes.
- In response to elders being misplaced in emergency rooms and the Alaska Psychiatric Institute (API), create a nine bed complex behavior neighborhood at the Anchorage Pioneer Home (APH) and increase capacity at APH to ensure elders on the waitlist are not impacted. Explore the feasibility of adding similar neighborhoods in other homes to help address mental health challenges across the state.
- Create a staff development/education program to meet the demands of working with an aging population.

The Alaska Pioneer Homes has a 105 year history in this great state serving Alaska's most vulnerable elders. The division helps to fill a large gap in the continuum of care and is committed to providing exceptional service in a fiscally responsible manner. The Alaska Pioneer Home's Advisory Board is dedicated to its partnership with the division and its continued advocacy of these vital homes and their residents.

Respectfully,



Rosemary Hagevig, Chairperson

Enclosed: FY2018 Alaska Pioneer Home Advisory Board Report