



**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** February 1, 2024

**TO:** The Honorable Mike Dunleavy, Governor of Alaska  
Kim Kovol, Department of Family and Community Services, Commissioner  
Heidi Hamilton, Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes Director

**FROM:** Robert Pawlowski  
Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board Chair

**SUBJECT:** Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board Recommendations

In keeping with the Alaska Pioneer Homes Advisory Board's (APHAB) statutory obligations, this memo is to brief you on the current state of the Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes and to provide recommendations 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". With Alaska's senior population growing at the fastest rate in the nation, it remains imperative that this unique state-run assisted living program remain available to residents that embrace our mission. Once becoming a resident, they depend on having reliable and caring assistance on a 24/7 basis with access to the level of care they need.

As a brief background, the APHAB was established in Alaska Statute 44.29.500 to be the link between the Pioneer Home residents, the public, and state policy makers. The APHAB's scope of responsibility encompasses the division's six homes: Anchorage Pioneer Home (APH), Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home in Palmer (AVPH), Fairbanks Pioneer Home (FPH), Juneau Pioneer Home (JPH), Ketchikan Pioneer Home (KPH) and Sitka Pioneer Home (SPH). After months of in- depth meetings with division staff and facility personnel, and meetings with Pioneer Home residents, the APHAB has formulated the following recommendations for your review.

- Due to the challenge of finding qualified individuals to fill direct care positions, support expedited processing of applicants to effectively compete in hiring at each Homes' locale. Options to pursue include competitive salary and benefits package and temporary duty and travel opportunities for health care workers to balance workloads with specific Home's needs.

- Support additional appropriated capital funding for the following projects:
  - Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home roof repair, including work with VA to have roof repair increased in priority due to life and safety concerns on the VA Grants to States for Assisted Living funding list.
  - Juneau Pioneer Home courtyard redesign and remodeling to provide residents a safe, useable, and protected outdoor area and mitigate concerns for the adjacent unfinished slope.
- Increase the funding available to address deferred maintenance across the Pioneer Home system. The deferred maintenance is \$26,328.6 (thousands) as tabled below:
  - | APH       | AVPH      | FPH       | JPH       | KPH       | SPH       | Total      |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| \$3,968.2 | \$3,226.9 | \$5,110.9 | \$5,855.9 | \$4,039.2 | \$4,127.5 | \$26,328.6 |

    - The age of each home (APH-47, AVPH-53, FPH-57, JPH-36, KPH-43, SPH-90 (yrs)) merits attention to comply with the American Disability Act and the change of care required with Alzheimer Disease and Related Dementia care.
- Based on the recommendations of the Fairbanks Pioneer Home Program and Expansion Plan (October 26,2023) explore opportunities for state, federal, and private partnerships to fund and execute the Program and Expansion Plan.
- Explore collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to offer more benefits to the veterans living within a Pioneer Home. Begin discussions for second Alaska State Veterans and Pioneer Home in Fairbanks.
- Work with community partners to provide education around long-term care planning. This would include helping citizens understand the financial implications of long-term care and the Pioneer Homes rate structure and application process.
- The Alaska Pioneer Home Advisory Board also strongly recommends that all state and local elected officials spend time visiting the homes. This will help officials to understand the importance of Pioneer Homes in serving Alaska's elders.

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

Respectfully,



Robert Pawlowski, Chair