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July 22, 2019

State of Alaska  
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities  
Alaska Marine Highway System  
7559 North Tongass Highway  
Ketchikan, AK 99901-9101

Attn: Captain John F. Falvey, Jr., General Manager,

I am writing to voice my thoughts on the proposed schedule patterns for the October 2019 through April 2020 Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) cycle. As Superintendent of the Cordova School District, I am privileged to represent the voices of 350+ students in our community.

Many have already written about the impact that ferry service schedule patterns will have not only on the community of Cordova, but on the coastal communities in the state, as well. From the movement of millions of pounds of product from the sea and the revenue it brings, to the transportation of medical supplies, resources, and families, AMHS is a vital lifeline to the communities it services.

More so, and from the Cordova School District's perspective, AMHS helps to provide access to academic and athletic opportunities our students may otherwise be limited to experiencing when disruption of regular ferry service occurs. Costs for airline tickets versus ferry tickets, for example, more than triple travel expenses for our students and potential visiting students, alike.

During the 2018-2019 School Year, Cordova School District was scheduled to host longstanding athletic tournaments as well as three Regional Alaska School Activities Association sporting events. Local AMHS Staff helped to facilitate route logistics for these occasions, which heightened the overall positive experience schools had while participating in these events. Unfortunately, our volleyball team incurred unplanned for expenses in traveling to the ASAA State Tournament by air in November, as did our students who qualified for the All-State Music Competition that same month. The ASAA Regional Wrestling Tournament was subsequently relocated due to the unavailability of the ferry in December, as well.

This upcoming school year, Cordova is slated to host the ASAA Regional Wrestling Tournament (December 2019) once again and the hugely popular and well-attended Aurora Music Festival (April 2020), in addition to our traditional events throughout the year. Each event has the potential to bring upwards of hundreds of students to our school and community, in addition to coaches, chaperones, and fans. Ferry travel during these events is crucial in helping to provide the most cost-effective means of travel to and from Cordova. These experiences are important for students in helping to set and pursue goals, to explore the world around them, and to develop qualities and characteristics of which we can all be proud.

*Debilitating* is among the many words that readily come to mind when thinking about how the proposed schedule will impact our community. I understand that the proposed schedule patterns are based on the funding levels for FY20. Consider the potential funding impact these proposed patterns will have on communities such as ours, not to mention the damage likely to occur in the faith we have built over time in AMHS, should the schedules be implemented as presented. The risk of loss on multiple fronts, both tangible and intangible, is too great to overlook.

Thank you for continuing to take public comment into account as you face tough decisions ahead. Our school and community appreciate the care the state has given to the operations of the AMHS and trust that service will continue to support what the coastal communities of Alaska have critically come to appreciate over the years.

Sincerely,

Alex Russin, Superintendent of Schools