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## WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

April 10, 2019

**[Draft letter from Council to Governor of Alaska, the Alaska State Assembly Speaker, and the Alaska State Senate President – names and addresses to be added once draft is approved]**

Dear...

On March 26, 2019, the Whatcom County Council approved Resolution 2019-018 (attached), voicing strong support for retaining the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) ferry service between Alaska and Bellingham, Washington.

For nearly thirty years the Port of Bellingham has served as the southern terminus for the AMHS, providing high level service by operating and maintaining the Bellingham Cruise Terminal and supporting the important connection between the contiguous 48 states and the State of Alaska. With up to 30,000 passengers using the ferry route each year, the AMHS Bellingham connection is a vital part of the Pacific Northwest's economy and provides an essential transportation link between our communities and ensures delivery of goods and services to many communities in Alaska that have no surface highways or airport services.

The AMHS Bellingham connection supports a variety of industries, including tourism, maritime, petroleum, seafood, military, construction, freight, and cargo. The negative economic and social impacts of altering this service will be far-reaching, affecting businesses and communities throughout Washington State and the State of Alaska.

The Whatcom County Council strongly, but respectfully, encourages the AMHS retain the year-round service between Alaska and Bellingham and allow continued, uninterrupted transport of goods, services, and passengers through this most scenic and direct route between our communities.

Sincerely,

Rud Browne, Chair  
Whatcom County Council

Attachment

C: AB20019-191

**RESOLUTION NO. 2019-018**

**IN SUPPORT OF RETAINING THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM BETWEEN  
BELLINGHAM AND ALASKA DESTINATIONS**

**WHEREAS**, the Alaska Marine Highway System ferry has been the only marine link between the contiguous 48 states and the State of Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, the Port of Bellingham has been the southern terminus of the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) since 1989; and

**WHEREAS**, the Port built the Bellingham Cruise Terminal for \$10.3 million to handle ferry traffic; and

**WHEREAS**, AMHS provides essential services to many coastal Alaskan communities which have no surface highway access; and

**WHEREAS**, a large number of residents of coastal Alaskan communities use the AMHS to access the healthcare and urgent medical services in Bellingham and Seattle while air travel is either not available or prohibitively expensive; and

**WHEREAS**, the loss of AMHS will impact many regional and cultural events such as SE Alaska State fair (Haines), Celebrations Juneau, and the Copper River Wild Salmon Festival Cordova, by limiting the participation of residents in these coastal communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the loss of AMHS will limit the opportunities for students to attend and compete in sporting events, leadership training and other school activities; and

**WHEREAS**, the loss of AMHS will result in less out of state tourism spending, impacting the local small businesses; and

**WHEREAS**, the AMHS has the same importance as other interstate highway systems in the lower 48 states for transportation and accessibility to other states and communities for residents of coastal Alaska; and

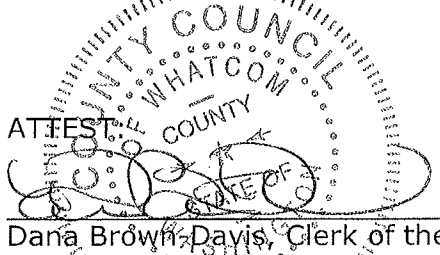
**WHEREAS**, the AMHS supports numerous direct and indirect family wage jobs not only in Bellingham but also in many coastal communities in Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, small business owners of Alaska and Washington state will be affected most by the loss of the AMHS to transport their goods and equipment to and from Alaska to support business and commerce in Alaska and the Bellingham area; and.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council, on this 26th day of March, 2019, do hereby ask and authorize the Council Chair to write letters of support on behalf of residents of Whatcom County to the Governor of the State of Alaska, the Alaska State Assembly Speaker and the Alaska State Senate President for continuing year-round AMHS services


**APPROVED**, this 26th day of March, 2019.

ATTEST




Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Rud Browne, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



Civil Deputy Prosecutor