JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING
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DATE: June 25, 2023

TO: Greg Smith, Assembly Human Resources Committee Chair
FROM: Emily Kane, Juneau Commission on Aging (JCOA) Chair
cc: JCOA Commissioners, JCOA Assembly Liaison Michelle Hale

RE: JCOA FY23 Annual Report

The JCOA appreciates the ongoing support from the Assembly in accomplishing our mutual goals to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our senior population, many of whom form an important source of volunteer support and whose pensions, retirement savings and social security checks contribute significantly to the CBJ economy. The JCOA aims to improve the quality of life and opportunities for seniors in our community by translating our research into recommendations for Assembly action, specifically to help our seniors age in place.

Our CBJ Resolution mandates that we "build a coalition among established groups and support programs working to address the needs of seniors," a goal we accomplished in 2022. Our duty to "collect facts and statistics and make studies of the conditions and problems pertaining to the employment, health, financial security, social welfare, and other factors that bear upon the well-being of older Juneauites," is the center of our work via outreach and engagement in "support[ing] the Assembly's Economic Plan as it relates to the senior economy."

In the past year the nine members of JCOA focused on the top priorities of senior needs in our community based on data gathered during our 4th decennial survey (2019-2021), via our monthly meetings where we share information about local senior-focused services, and more recently from three May 2023 Listening Sessions in partnership with our local AARP.

JCOA 2022-2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1) JCOA created the Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition **(SREC)** in early 2022. SREC's mission is to bring eldercare providers together to problem solve mutual issues, share information and be a collaborative force for change. The JCOA then wrote a $2.5 million project grant funded by the Margaret A Cargill Philanthropies (October 2022) that will hire four dedicated positions to serve seniors: a program director, recruiter (housed with AKDOLWD), trainer, and navigator (housed with SAIL). The project will focus on workforce development of direct service providers (DSPs) for home health care and implement a two-year pilot DSP wage supplementation to increase the hourly wages of DSPs in the SE region. The grant funds are projected to last for two years.

2) Through extensive national research and interviews with local developers, two housing position papers were created: one for developers, **"Building Age Friendly Housing in Juneau,"**

and another for CBJ employees, **"Can You Support Age Friendly Construction in Proactive Ways?"** These papers provide detailed examples of what can be done to support the creation of new housing of all types suitable for residents of all ages – universal design. They are now being used as talking points in emails, discussions and presentations within the broader housing community to move the age friendly housing discussion from theoretical words to practical action items.

3) JCOA completed the work necessary to receive recognition by AARP's national "network of Age-Friendly States and Communities." Juneau is the second Alaskan community to qualify for this **designation**. Anchorage received the recognition in 2022. This is not just an honor, but a responsibility, and the JCOA will continue to partner with Juneau AARP Community Action Team (CAT) to increase the all-age friendliness of our community.

4) A subcommittee was established to explore how to increase opportunities for senior recreation, fitness and social connectedness. The US Surgeon General recently warned that our elders are suffering from epidemic levels of boredom, loneliness and helplessness. We are committed to alleviating this plague.

5) JCOA and co-sponsor AARP facilitated three "Listening Sessions" throughout the city to gather information from seniors about their perspective and needs in eight domains of livability. These sessions included a presentation by CBJ staff (Ruth Kostik) on the four major tax relief programs offered to seniors by the City and Borough of Juneau.

The purpose of the JCOA is to advise the Assembly on senior issues and to promote awareness of all aspects of life affecting our seniors, and the role of seniors in the social and economic life of CBJ. We take seriously our duty to "promote senior citizen participation in the planning and development of programs which benefit and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of senior citizens." More specifically, we ask the Assembly to give deliberate consideration to paving the way for three major missions which will require your support.

A. Distribute to all CBJ employees our position paper **"Can You Support Age Friendly Construction in Proactive Ways?"** and urge them to do whatever they can in their role in city government to prioritize and implement the list of ten very specific requests that would enable age friendly housing and support developers in this effort.
B. A Senior Center was overwhelmingly the number one request from the AARP/JCOA Listening Sessions held at our downtown, Douglas and Mendenhall libraries in May 2023. JCOA requests Assembly support to explore the creation of multi-purpose senior center to provide community meals, offer art classes, movie and game nights. The Senior Center would diminish isolation and promote intellectual stimulation with lectures (World Affairs Council), as well as self-help information (modified exercise,

improving vision, or stretching/yoga provided by our own local health care/eldercare providers).

C. JCOA, via the MACP SREC Grant, has created and will fund a "senior navigator" to facilitate matching seniors' needs with local resources. This position is intended to be housed with SAIL (the current ADRC in Juneau) and help seniors coordinate among the array of senior services currently available (CBJ, JCOA, CCS, SAIL, Bartlett Regional Hospital, Teal Street, ORCA, Hospice and Home Care, Cornerstone, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions Club, Alaska Commission on Aging, etc.) This position will be funded for the two-year grant term and, if successful, the JCOA will look to the CBJ to assist in continuing to support this crucial position.

Respectfully,

Juneau Commission on Aging Emily Kane, JCOA Chair and Medical Provider
Linda Kruger, JCOA Secretary, SREC, AARP
Deb Craig, JCOA Treasurer, SREC Secretary
Kathleen Samalon, Housing Subcommittee Co-Chair
Carol Ende, Housing Subcommittee Co-Chair
Sue Warner, Fitness/Recreation Subcommittee Chair
Jennifer Carson, Bartlett Regional Hospital, SREC
Jennifer Garrison, Eldercare Provider
Ann Stepetin, Eldercare coordinator for Central Council of the Indian Tribes of Alaska