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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

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April 13, 2017

Ms. Vickie Wilson
Director, Division of Alaska Pioneer Homes
Mr. Robert Sivertsen and Mr. Robert Hall, Sr.
Co-Chairs, Alaska Pioneers' Homes Advisory Board
Ms. Gina Del Rosario
Juneau Pioneer Home Administrator
Mr. Joshua Shaver
Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home Administrator

Dear Ms. Wilson, Board Members, Administrators, and Pioneer Home Residents,

I want to take this opportunity for you to hear directly from me about my commitment to the Alaska Pioneer Homes. You know more than anyone that Alaska's Pioneer Homes are extraordinary places. I have visited most of them and enjoy talking with the wonderful residents and staff.

I have a very personal connection with the residents and staff at the Alaska Veterans and Pioneers Home in Palmer and the residents of Palmer. My father, Ed Walker, a WWII Veteran who fought the war on Alaskan soil as a member of the Alaska Scouts, lived there the last six years of his life. When I would return home each Sunday evening from a family get together to that wonderful place, he would boast about the caring staff and how much he loved living there.

I am proud of the services provided by the compassionate staff at the Pioneer Homes. I am also proud of the residents who have made significant contributions to our state and country. For these reasons, my FY 18 budget transmitted to the Legislature provided for a small increase to the Pioneer Homes budget.

I was surprised when my budget was reduced by over \$6.5 million in the Pioneer Homes line items during the legislative process. The Department of Health and Social Services received numerous calls from Alaskans across the state following these line item reductions. The Department began to respond to these requests for information about how the Pioneer Homes would be impacted by such a cut. These reductions could have closed two Pioneer Homes effective on July 1st, requiring significant transition time for residents, families and staff.

Similarly, the University of Alaska Board of Regents is meeting this week to discuss the proposed budget cuts prior to the University budget being finalized, since the proposed cuts would require lead time to implement.

Pioneer Homes Administrators and Residents

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I thank the Senate for their action today in their "Sense of the Senate" to confirm their strong support of the Pioneer Homes and bringing finality to the issue.

I will continue to do everything within my power to assure that no Pioneer Home will be closed while I am Governor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Walker

Governor