



April 1, 2024

Dear legislators,

The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness supports housing-focused solutions to help our neighbors who experience homelessness. While we are working to make housing more affordable and attainable, we recognize that our community does not yet have enough stable housing for everyone.

That's why we urge financial support from the Alaska Legislature to keep the Municipality's East 56th Avenue Shelter open year-round. E. 56th Avenue Shelter, a transformed Municipal building in Midtown, has been well-run and well-staffed with an unprecedented focus on housing. People not only get a safe, warm place to spend the night but also are assessed for housing needs through enrollment in our community's unified Coordinated Entry System, the first step from houseless to housed. Housing assessments now are being done at Anchorage emergency cold weather shelters within 7 days of someone arriving.

We also know our community needs more than 200 additional year-round shelter beds, as identified in our 2023 gap analysis assessing needs vs. capacity.

A year-round shelter is part of a coordinated, multi-track strategy to reduce both encampments and homelessness in Anchorage. The Coalition is well on its way to getting 150 people housed this winter and spring through our Next Step program that includes case management, tailored supports, landlord supports and financial help. We envision Next Step housing another 150 people who are living outdoors this summer. The potential addition of 200 year-round shelter beds when combined with 300 people housed means 500 fewer people unsheltered and camping outdoors.

The Municipality does not have the funds to operate the shelter year-round without state support. Without more housing-focused shelter space, more of our community members will be living outdoors without easy access to services. Often, our unhoused neighbors are from other parts of Alaska, underscoring that this is a statewide issue.

A year-round 56th Avenue Shelter will add a housing-centered platform from which individuals can take steps forward. It will provide space for 150 to 200 people, keeping them safe and connected to services. The Anchorage Assembly and Mayor Dave Bronson jointly requested \$4 million from the Legislature to operate the shelter during the summer season, matching the Municipality's commitment. Feel free to reach out to me at the Coalition at 907-312-9547.

Thank you for your consideration,



Lisa Demer
External Relations Director, Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness