



February 4, 2025

Senator Lisa Murkowski  
522 Senate Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510

Senator Dan Sullivan  
302 Senate Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510

Representative Nick Begich  
153 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515

RE: Protection of Essential Air Service Program

Dear Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, and Congressman Begich:

The Aleut Community of St. Paul Island Tribal Government (ACSPI), the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association (CBSFA), the City of Saint Paul (CSP), and the Tanadgusix Corporation (TDX), who together constitute the primary local governance and economic development entities on Saint Paul Island, are alarmed by a proposal contained in a recent House Budget Committee report (see page 48 of: <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000194-74a8-d40a-ab9e-7fbc70940000> ) to repeal mandatory subsidies and overflight fees that are necessary to support the Essential Air Service (EAS) program.

As you are aware, the EAS program is vital to the continued survival of our community and other remote communities throughout Alaska as well as the mainland United States. Undermining or eliminating the EAS program would add to an already grim economic picture resulting from the collapsed Bering Sea crab fisheries and instability in global markets. It would make the cost of traveling to/from Saint Paul Island, as well as the cost of groceries, mail, cargo, medical and other supplies, prohibitive and unaffordable to most residents. Furthermore, it would be even more difficult, if not impossible, for residents to seek routine and preventive medical care, as our main hospital and primary medical care is located 800 air miles away in Anchorage. The average round trip airfare to and from Anchorage typically costs \$1,846. We estimate that without EAS support this cost would amount to over \$2,600.

In addition, without the EAS program, the operation of the Trident Seafoods plant (which is currently shuttered due to the status of the crab stocks) and its ability to transport workers, supplies, and other inputs, is also greatly if not potentially fatally impaired. During normal times, the Trident plant is the main economic engine on Saint Paul Island, processing all of the North Region Bering Sea snow crab (BSS) quota as well as the Area 4CDE CDQ/IFQ halibut summer fishery which is vital to local families and fishermen.

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We understand the need to reconcile our nation's budget to reflect the priorities of the new Administration, and support many of these efforts. However, we urge you to protect a program that is vital to so many Alaskan communities, residents, and businesses. We wish you a successful and productive first session of the 119<sup>th</sup> Congress for the benefit Alaska and the nation.

Sincerely,



Jacob Mercurief, Mayor  
City of Saint Paul



John W. Melovidov, President  
Aleut Community of Saint Paul Island



Ray Melovidov, President  
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association



John G. Lyons, CEO  
Tanadgusix Corporation

cc. Saint Paul City Council  
Tribal Council of St. Paul  
CBSFA Board  
TDX Corporation Board  
Governor Dunleavy  
Lt. Governor Meyer  
Lyman Hoffman, Alaska State Senator  
Bryce Edgmon, Alaska House Speaker  
Shelly Larson, Regional Administrator, Alaska Region, Federal Aviation Administration  
Phillip A. Zavadil, City Manager, City of Saint Paul  
Patrick Baker, Executive Director, Pribilof Islands Aleut Community of Saint Paul Island  
Chris Arnim and Dean Fasnacht, Trident Seafoods  
Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League  
Alaska Air Carriers Association

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