



ALASKA STATE HOCKEY

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August 30, 2016

Sent via email: ua-bor@alaska.edu

Interim UA President Pat Pitney
ua.president@alaska.edu

Sheri Buretta, Chair
sburetta@alaska.edu

Re: Continuation of the UAA Hockey Program

Dear Chair Buretta:

I am currently the President of the Alaska State Hockey Association (“ASHA”). ASHA is the Alaskan local affiliate under the umbrella of USA Hockey, one of many National Governing Bodies under the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee. ASHA provides the forum for amateur hockey in Alaska and has 10,000 members plus. Our members range from youth players under six to adult players in their 80’s. Annually, each spring, USA Hockey hosts the largest North American indoor adult hockey tournament right here in Anchorage. Our players come from as far north as Barrow and as far south as Juneau. One of our growth areas is from our newest association on Kodiak Island. Alaska has traditionally been known as a “hockey state”, with Anchorage and Fairbanks being the largest concentration of hockey players and families. We enjoy this reputation despite our limited statewide population and vast distances of other markets because of the passion and energy our state and local communities have and continue to place in hockey, and because of the number of talented players that come from Alaska.

On August 29, 2020, our Board of Directors met for a regularly scheduled meeting and among the items discussed was the state of UAA Hockey and the recent news of the program being on the chopping block. We as a Board have long recognized the vital importance that UAA Hockey has on our Alaskan community at large, and most especially the Alaska hockey community. I am confident that I do not need to spend time writing to you about the importance of youth sports in general, especially when we all recognize our local schools only offer gym class two days a week and our



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average high school student cannot do basic jumping jacks, jump rope or even skip backwards. Our Alaska youth need local athletic programs, like hockey, which ASHA and its local associations provide, but just as importantly, they need local role models to look up to, which the players and alumni of the UAA Hockey program has long supplied to this community.

When I think about our identity as Alaskans, and in particular our identity as a “hockey hotbed”, it is impossible to envision the Alaskan hockey environment continuing to be what it is without this local collegiate hockey program. These difficult budgetary times do call for serious discussions; however, we should not sacrifice our self-identity and community values because of a current shortfall. The synergy that exists between all of the local programs and the UAA athletics is impossible to quantify, but without question, if you take away UAA hockey, it will unquestionably be devastating to Alaska hockey and our community. It will have long lasting and devastating effects on the state of hockey in Alaska, particularly to our local hockey programs, which that in turn will only hurt our youth and this community. Matt Curley, his staff and players have embedded themselves in this community and, in the long tradition of UAA Hockey, have supported our local associations and youth on and off the ice. Their presence in this community and the historical presence of UAA Hockey in this community is an intangible benefit that does not find its way onto a line item budget, but whose value is frankly irreplaceable. Eliminating the UAA Hockey program will create a vacuum in our community that that cannot be filled and will have a long lasting crushing impact on the Anchorage community and on Alaska Hockey.

I am confident that you appreciate that the “give-back” for your players to have that on-ice presence with the youth is immeasurable, and it instills community engagement as part of the collegiate experience which is priceless. Just ask UAA alumni and former NHL Player Justin Johnson, he will tell you how much he grew as a result of his experience. That engagement is part of what I am calling the “synergy” between our programs.

I was reflective of my past communications to this body when I noted that as looked across the our board room, now ZOOM ROOM, of how I was struck at just how many faces among our board were your alumni. The faces of those individuals from your programs who learned “back in the day” that it was in giving that we receive. They



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continue to this day to be active in our communities and to give of themselves, not just in the hockey world, but in all walks of life. Our rooms and our rinks are full of your alumni from UAA and UAF-they are our coaches, our officials, our local association leaders and administrators, our firemen, our police officers, our local physician assistants to help us when we break, our teachers who teach our children, and the list goes on. Your hockey alumni are the faces of our community and have shaped our world and the lives of our children for decades. Your collegiate athletes are and have been the role models for our youth that are vital to the survival of vibrant positive Alaskan communities. To take away that pool of future leader's from Alaska would be short sighted in these times. It would strike a blow to not just the identity of hockey in Alaska, not just to the identity of the university itself, but to the identity our very state.

ASHA knows and appreciates the challenges faced by you, but we urge you to not cut the UAA Hockey Program as it has a far greater impact and positive influence than one might otherwise consider-well beyond what happens on a given Friday or Saturday night at the Wells Fargo Center. Clearly, ASHA and its 10,000 members are urging that you not cut this vital program because we firmly believe that if you do, the blow to the effected community's self-identity, and frankly the identity of the university, will have a far greater reach than can be anticipated.

Our ASHA Board unanimously passed a resolution on Saturday, August 29, 2020 in full support of the retention the UAA hockey program and opposition to cutting the program for the reasons stated herein, and also because of our board's strongly held conviction that your programs, and your players have had, and will continue to have a tangible and intangible positive influence on the strength and character of Alaska for years to come if only given the continued opportunity to do so.

Yours in Hockey,
s/Darryl L. Thompson/s
Darryl L. Thompson, Esq.
ASHA President

cc: Governor Mike Dunleavy
c/o Assistant Janice Mason
Janice.mason@alaska.gov



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