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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 30, 2013

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Mr. Theophilos Gemelas
CMR Program Manager
Office of University Programs
Department of Homeland Security
S&T Stop 0217
245 Murray Lane, SW
Washington, DC 20528-0001

Dear Mr. Gemelas:

I am writing in support of the University of Alaska's proposal to create and sustain a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence (COE)—Center for Maritime Research (CMR) in Anchorage.

Alaska is geographically well positioned to address and credibly test the effective understanding of issues associated with the maritime domain in the Arctic region. As the opening up of the Northwest Passage due to melting ice becomes a reality, Alaska continues to be on the front lines of maritime security that could impact this Nation's safety, economy, and environment.

The University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) is well positioned at the Port of Anchorage to provide realistic demonstrations of how various sensors can collect information above, below, and on the water, and at the port to understand conditions in this extreme cold environment. In addition, since the receding of the Arctic Sea ice will result in previously un-navigable waters becoming available to vessel traffic and creating challenges for stakeholders such as the Alaska Coast Guard, UAA will provide similar demonstrations in this region of Alaska.

The UAA team and its university partners will not only utilize a variety of technologies, but will also introduce a unique network of human observers comprised of Alaska Natives. Alaska Natives provide a unique expertise as they are attuned to the extreme environmental conditions and can detect anomalies not discernible by other observers. UAA's university partners include the University of Maryland and Louisiana State University (LSU), as well as institutes such as the Alaska Vocational Technical Center (AVTEC) and the Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute. The partners not only provide technological

Gemelas
September 30
Page 2

resources, but geographic diversity that can demonstrate the universal viability of critical technologies.

Again, I support UAA's proposal for the development of a DHS Center of Excellence—Center for Maritime Research in Anchorage. Alaska is the ideal geographic environment to develop and test technologies to address the increasingly important Arctic challenges that will support critical the mission of DHS. I urge you to approve this proposal.

Sincerely,



Mark Begich
United States Senator