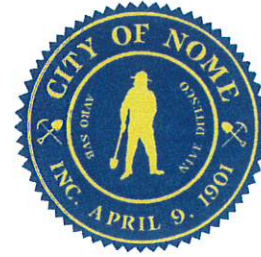


**KAWERAK, INC.**



November 6, 2018

The Honorable Representative Neal Foster  
Alaska Legislature  
State of Alaska  
Juneau, AK 99811  
VIA EMAIL: [rep.neal.foster@ak.leg.gov](mailto:rep.neal.foster@ak.leg.gov)

The Honorable Senator Donny Olson  
Alaska Legislature  
State of Alaska  
Juneau, AK 99811  
VIA EMAIL: [sen.donny.olson@ak.leg.gov](mailto:sen.donny.olson@ak.leg.gov)

The Honorable Governor Bill Walker  
Office of the Governor  
State of Alaska  
PO Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811-0001  
VIA EMAIL: [barbara.blake@alaska.gov](mailto:barbara.blake@alaska.gov)

The Honorable Bryan Schroder, U.S. Attorney  
U.S. Attorney's Office - Alaska  
222 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. Ste 253, #9  
Anchorage, AK 99513  
VIA FACSIMILE: (907) 271-3224

Jeffery E. Peterson, Special Agent in Charge  
Federal Bureau of Investigation  
Anchorage Field Office  
101 E. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
VIA EMAIL: [jepeterson@fbi.gov](mailto:jepeterson@fbi.gov)

Dear Honorable Representative Foster, Honorable Senator Olson, Honorable Governor Walker, Honorable U.S. Attorney Schroder, and Special Agent in Charge Peterson:

Kawerak, Inc. is the regional tribal consortium in the Bering Strait Region of Alaska, authorized by 19 of the 20 federally recognized tribes to enter into a self-governance compact with the U.S. government to provide services for our membership. The City of Nome is a First Class City that organized under Alaska Statutes Title 29 that has elected the "manager-council" form of government, meaning the City is managed by a paid City Manager. As the President/CEO of Kawerak and the Mayor of Nome, we write to you jointly to request assistance to ensure justice for all victims of sexual assault and other violent crimes in the Bering Strait region.

Enclosed is a resolution regarding justice for victims of sexual assault and violent crimes that was adopted at a recent Kawerak Board of Director's meeting. We are also attaching copies of news articles relative to recent reports of sexual assault, which indicate the public concern, and highlights the need – and our desire – that the public regain faith and trust in the Nome Police Department (NPD).

Background:

- In April 2018, the Alaska Office of Special Prosecutions filed charges against a NPD Community Service Officer (CSO) for punching a woman in the head while on duty in

February 2018. Following the incident, the CSO resigned his duties, but admitted punching the homeless woman, stating he did so because he could not wake her up. On August 24, 2018, the Anchorage Daily News ran an article with the headline: "Nome officer who admitted punching homeless woman is rehired by department." The former CSO had been rehired at the direction of the then-City Manager and NPD Chief (both of whom are no longer City employees) on a temporary basis as a dispatcher, and was subsequently terminated again.

- On May 7, 2018, a group of Alaska Native sexual assault survivors went before the Nome City Council to express concern about lack of investigation into sexual assaults reported to NPD. They requested a special investigator be assigned to handle sexual assault reports, an ethics review of NPD protocol, an independent investigator to investigate NPD's handling of sexual assault reports, and the group shed light on the need for victim centered SA and DV interview and investigation training for all Nome Police Officers.
- In May 2018, the former NPD Chief acknowledged there was a backlog of rape kits which had not been submitted to the State Crime Lab. At a City Council meeting on June 25, the Chief confirmed 126 rape kits, some dating back to as far as 2005, were recently submitted to the State Crime Lab.
- On August 27, the City Council announced a new Police Chief would be hired effective September 15, 2018. He has reported for duty and has expressed his commitment to re-establishing trust with the community.
- On September 3, 2018, the Anchorage Daily News ran an article titled: "911 Dispatcher: I was raped and Nome police colleagues ignored the case." The complaint alleges that the dispatcher waited more than a year for a local investigation into an alleged assault against her and eventually reported it to the Alaska State Troopers. The officer she reported the assault to was subsequently demoted from the rank of Lieutenant to Sergeant.
- On September 17, 2018, the City Manager gave his 30 day notice. He was subsequently relieved of his contract 3 days before it was set to expire after a woman brought allegations of improper communication by him to her – before the City Council.
- On September 30, 2018, the Anchorage Daily News published an article with the headline: "A second woman comes forward to say she was raped in Nome without consequence."
- On October 12, 2018, the Kawerak Board of Directors passed the attached resolution, seeking justice for victims of sexual assault and violent crimes.

Progress to date:

- The City of Nome has hired a new Chief of Police.
- CSO was released from employment at NPD, and employment of two other Nome Police Officers was ended as well.
- The City of Nome has hired an interim City Manager, former Mayor John Handeland.
- Kawerak, Inc. provided the City of Nome approximately \$16,000 to provide Nome Police Officers with training.
- The City of Nome has ordered officer body cameras.
- Kawerak, Inc. is convening a panel of service providers from the region to explain the process from investigation to prosecution, of sexual assault reports, during the Kawerak Regional Conference.
- The City Council is investigating formation of a public safety advisory committee.
- NPD has employed one additional investigator to date, another starting mid-November, and a third slated for January 2019 to advance additional cases in the queue through the investigative process and referral to the DA.

Specifically, we are jointly requesting:

1. That the Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, exercise its authority and responsibilities under Title 42, U.S.C., Section 14141 to determine if there have been civil rights violations by the NPD in regards to sexual assault and violent crime investigations and to provide guidance to the new leadership at the NPD to assist leadership to identify and implement best practices for law enforcement agencies when it comes to appropriate response to sexual assault and violent crime reports.
2. That our State Legislative Delegation seek to have the State Legislature enact stiffer penalties and close loopholes on sex crimes, such as in the recent Justin Schneider case, where it was determined that masturbating and ejaculating on someone without their consent is not considered a crime
3. That the State of Alaska provide additional personnel resources to the Nome District Attorney's Office where our two DA's rank at the top of the list for highest caseload per attorney in the State.
4. That the State of Alaska expedite filling the three vacant State Trooper positions, and assign a State Trooper specifically to handle sexual abuse investigations in our region. There are currently only 4 State Troopers for our region; 3 positions are vacant.
5. That the State of Alaska prioritize filling Office of Children's Services four Caseworker vacancies in the Bering Strait Region; where we currently have only two Caseworkers with over 315 open cases. Four positions are vacant.
6. That the Federal Government and State of Alaska provide any other resources that the City of Nome might benefit from to strengthen NPD and to assist the Department in regaining the confidence of the general public.

Kawerak, Inc. and the City of Nome are jointly submitting these requests, in the spirit of cooperation, and with the mutual goal of improving public safety for victims of sexual assault and violent crimes. We believe these actions will help in improving outcomes, as well as in restoring the public trust in the Nome Police Department. Thank you for considering our requests; we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

KAWERAK, INCORPORATED



Melanie Bahnke, President/CEO

CITY OF NOME



Mayor Richard Beneville

cc: The Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski  
The Honorable Senator Dan Sullivan  
The Honorable Congressman Don Young

Enc: Kawerak Board of Directors Resolution 2018-11  
News articles related to this correspondence