February 12, 2018

Senator Lisa Murkowski  Senator Dan Sullivan  Congressman Don Young
709 Hart Senate Building  702 Hart Senate Building  2314 Rayburn House Building
Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510  Washington, DC 20510

Daryl J. Boness, Ph.D.  Governor Walker
Chairman, Marine Mammal Commission  3rd Floor, State Capitol
4340 East-West Highway, # 700  PO Box 110001
Bethesda, MD 20814  Juneau, AK 99811

RE: Marine Mammal Commission (MMC); Critical to Alaska Native Co-Management Efforts; Letter of Support for 2019 MMC Budget Inclusion

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, Congressman Young, Governor Walker, and Dr. Boness,

Kawerak is disheartened to see that President Trump released the Administration’s budget proposal to Congress on February 12, 2018 but did not include the Marine Mammal Commission (MMC) for Fiscal Year 2019.

The MMC is a critical pillar of marine mammal management, established by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which most importantly reviews the activities of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The MMC serves a critical function here in Alaska and has assisted co-management groups with their objectives. Ms. Vera Metcalf of the Eskimo Walrus Commission in Nome serves as an Alaska Native Advisor to the MMC and her service is of great importance to all of the Alaska Native Co-Management groups in Alaska.

Alaska Native subsistence hunters from the Bering Strait region rely heavily upon the marine mammal resources of Alaska’s bountiful oceans. Dramatic changes are occurring that our people and communities are struggling to cope with and Kawerak believes in and relies upon the work of the MMC to help us carry out our traditional, subsistence way of life. For example, earlier this month Kawerak staff engaged with the MMC to better understand the role of saxitoxins in marine mammals which may be contributing factors in large scale marine mammal strandings within the last two years in the Bering Sea. We believe the MMC is critical to issues such as co-management and marine mammal management and urge your offices to consider incorporating the necessary funding for the MMC to carry out its mandated functions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
KAWERAK, INC.

Melanie Bahnke, President