



Municipality of Anchorage

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor declares Civil Emergency in the Municipality of Anchorage

City braces for unprecedented housing and public health and safety crisis

ANCHORAGE, AK—Today, Mayor Ethan Berkowitz declared a Civil Emergency in the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) to address the impacts of state budget cuts that pose dire and imminent public health and safety risks. Municipal Code 3.80.060 allows the mayor to make use of all available resources of the municipal government, including municipal personnel, as may be reasonably necessary to cope with an emergency. Actions may include alternate deployment of current MOA employees and the swift reallocation of resources necessary to preserve and protect the public safety, health, and welfare.

“This is an unprecedented decision for an unprecedented situation,” said Mayor Ethan Berkowitz. “Existing shelters have lost funding at a time when demand for their services is projected to skyrocket. First responders and health care professionals are anticipating a massive surge in 911 and emergency room calls, and it is imperative that we meet this impending humanitarian crisis with the resources that we deploy when responding to all emergencies.”

The emergency proclamation allows the MOA to prepare for the significant and grave impacts of the state budget vetoes, including:

- \$5.8 million cut in Anchorage-specific services to homeless, resulting in a projected 800 more unsheltered homeless in our community, adding significantly to the burden of first responders and pushing vulnerable individuals and families beyond their tipping point;
- the temporary closing of Brother Francis Shelter, forcing 240 homeless individuals to become immediately unsheltered on Aug. 1, and the dramatic reduction of services by 140 people after its reopening on Aug. 5;
- cuts to Medicaid, senior benefits, legal services, food banks, domestic violence case management and support, and behavioral health, causing public health and public safety emergencies and the eviction of our most vulnerable residents;
- 41 percent cut to state’s contribution to the University of Alaska, resulting in the projected loss of 700 jobs in Anchorage and projected to push Anchorage into recession.

The emergency declaration will also enable the MOA to provide housing or temporary structures for emergency shelter, as well as support the provision of social services to homeless individuals and families who would be left unsheltered with no immediate options available to them.

“Now, more than ever, we must come together as a community—as we did during the Nov. 30, 2018 earthquake—to help our neighbors, each other, and our city,” said Anchorage Assembly Chair Felix Rivera.

The Mayoral Proclamation of Civil Emergency is in effect for 48 hours, beginning 3:00 p.m. on Wed, July 24, 2019. The Anchorage Assembly must meet on Friday to deliberate and vote on an extension of the declaration.

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Media contact: Kristin DeSmith, Communications Director, Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, (907) 231-2226, desmithk@muni.org