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Four Alaska partners announce
$40 million investment in solutions for homelessness

Anchorage, AK — Alaska’s biggest health care provider, biggest private funder,
biggest private landlord, and biggest private health insurer announce they are
pledging $40 million over five years to help Anchorage turn the corner on
homelessness.

This is the most significant private investment to address this critical issue in
state history. The money will mean more housing and other help for individuals
and families. Fresh strategies that have made a difference in other cities, such as
accurate tracking and follow-up of everyone who is experiencing homelessness,
are central to the effort.

The four funders and their commitments are:

• Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska, $5 million over three years;
• Providence Health & Services Alaska, $15 million over five years;
• Rasmuson Foundation, $10 million over three years; and
• Weidner Apartment Homes, $10 million over five years.

“We are in this together with our public and nonprofit partners, who already are
running shelters, working with street youth and sending teams into homeless
camps,” said Diane Kaplan, Rasmuson Foundation president and CEO. “We still
need government dollars but on top of that we can provide new funding streams
to create a path out of homelessness for everyone. After a challenging summer,
we now have a stable base of state funding for the coming year. These private
investments wouldn’t be possible without it.”

Other key partners include the Municipality of Anchorage, which is committed to
Anchored Home, Anchorage’s plan to address homelessness; the Anchorage
Coalition to End Homelessness, which has staff working to do just that every day;
and the United Way of Anchorage, which is trying a new way of helping those
who have been chronically homeless. Key funding partners have been Alaska
Housing Finance Corp., the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and the U.S.
Department of Housing and Urban Development. Others who have invested
dollars or time in new approaches include ConocoPhillips, Wells Fargo,
Southcentral Foundation and Cook Inlet Housing Authority.
All 12 Alaska Native regional corporations invested in Path to Independence, an Anchorage partnership which provides rent support, case management and help with landlord issues for participants.

The work will bring in new tools and build on existing resources that already save many lives, the shelters, meal programs and case management services run by nonprofits including Catholic Social Services, Bean’s Cafe and Covenant House.

“We are involved because we believe everyone deserves a safe place to live that they can call their own. This private investment means Anchorage will be able to do more than it has ever done to help those in need. We already know that even short-term help of the right kind makes a huge difference in keeping people housed,” said W. Dean Weidner, founder and chairman of Weidner Apartment Homes.

This is a new funding partnership and brings opportunity for others to join. The Anchored Home plan will guide the work. Funding partners also will work with the Municipality and nonprofits to make sure investments target gaps in services. In this collaborative effort, key investments will be coordinated among the partners.

The vision is a healthier community where homelessness is rare, brief and one-time, and where any resident who needs a home is housed.

“Homelessness is a health crisis as well as a housing crisis,” said Jim Grazko, president and general manager of Premera’s Alaska office. “When people get off the street, their life expectancies increase dramatically. When people have a home, they are much less likely to end up needing emergency care. The cost of health care goes down, and people are safer.”

In the coming weeks and months, organizations will announce specific projects and programs that build on years of work by nonprofits.

“This is truly a partnership. We need to work together for greatest impact,” said Preston Simmons, chief executive of Providence Health & Services Alaska. “Our organization has a long history serving the poor and vulnerable, and we believe housing is truly the first prescription to healthy living. We are eager to build on our past efforts to ensure our neighbors, our community and our economy can thrive.”

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About the funders

**Premera Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alaska**, which has operated in the state since 1952, is a not-for-profit, independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association. Premera and its family of companies provide comprehensive health benefits and tailored services to approximately 2 million people, from individuals to Fortune 100 companies.

**Providence Health & Services Alaska** is part of Providence St. Joseph Health, a not-for-profit network of hospitals, care centers, health plans, physicians, clinics, home health services, affiliated services and educational facilities. Providence’s long history of serving the state dates back more than 100 years to the Gold Rush when the Sisters of Providence brought health care to Nome. Today, Providence continues that mission of service by providing Alaskans with health care offered nowhere else in the state.

Through grantmaking and initiatives, **Rasmuson Foundation** aims to promote a better life for all Alaskans with investments of $25 million to $30 million a year. Main funding areas are the arts, housing, homelessness, education, healthcare and organizational development. The foundation was created in 1955 by Jenny Rasmuson to honor her late husband, E.A. Rasmuson.

Founded in 1977, **Weidner Apartment Homes** is a privately held real estate investment, development and management company with properties in 12 states and four Canada provinces. In Alaska, its portfolio of more than 5,225 apartments spread over 44 communities make it the largest private owner of apartments in the state. Weidner is headquartered in Kirkland, Wash.