

## 32<sup>nd</sup> Alaska State Legislature



October 5, 2021

Governor Michael J. Dunleavy  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 110001  
Juneau, AK 99811

<Delivered Electronically>

Dear Governor Dunleavy:

We are writing to request your immediate announcement of a disaster declaration, giving you the additional tools necessary and proven effective to fight the current surge in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. The Legislature demonstrated leadership in passing a disaster declaration in April, which you immediately ended. Now, it is you, and only you, who has the power to expediently declare a disaster, helping to prevent additional needless suffering and deaths.

Here is where we are **today**: Alaska has the highest case rate in the nation. Alaska's death rate is *no longer* one of the lowest — ours is now the 27th lowest in the country — and our hospitalization rates are climbing. Our military leaders on Alaska's largest base have determined the current case rates threaten their mission; no longer trusting the State's handling of the virus, they are requiring masks of their soldiers when in our communities. Healthcare sites around Alaska have run up against a shortage of monoclonal antibodies as COVID-19 infections soar. Our healthcare providers continue to tell us that increasing capacity is important, but reducing cases is the utmost priority. Vaccination rates remain essentially flat, meaning other approaches to prevention are imperative. Up-to-date data are the only data you should be referencing.

You wisely declared and extended a disaster in 2020, heeding the warnings by public health professionals regarding potential catastrophic impacts. Your decision to temporarily limit indoor, public capacity sizes and to require masks in certain settings helped to significantly slow transmission — buying time for healthcare response and helping Alaska to avoid the worst possible outcomes in the early days of the pandemic. You made the right decisions, no matter how hard they were, when other leaders didn't.

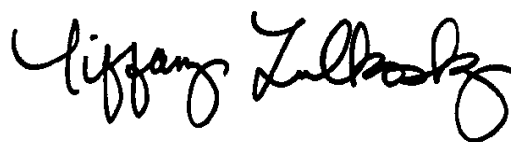
But today, conditions have drastically deteriorated, and we are facing a resurgence of the virus. As hospital after hospital across Alaska enacts crisis standards of care, this is undeniable, and comes despite early successes and other worthwhile initiatives to expand healthcare resources. Your administration's efforts have been extensive and commendable, but refusing to implement simple, temporary actions (e.g., masking and gathering limits) known to successfully prevent infections and subsequent suffering is indefensible. You have access to the only tools that will turn the tide, and Alaskans need you to use them.

When the actions you take today — however heroic they may feel — aren't having the necessary effects, those actions aren't enough. The health and well-being of Alaskans, as well as the welfare of our exhausted healthcare workforce, depends on masking requirements and gathering size limits only you can make possible. This isn't politics. This is public health and economic security.

Signed,



Representative Liz Snyder  
House Health & Social Services, Co-Chair



Representative Tiffany Zulkosky.  
House Health & Social Services, Co-Chair



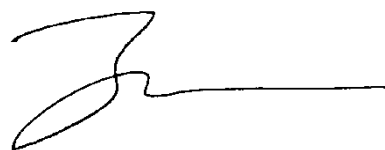
Representative Matt Claman



Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins



Representative Calvin Schrage



Representative Zack Fields



Representative Sara Hannan



Representative Adam Wool



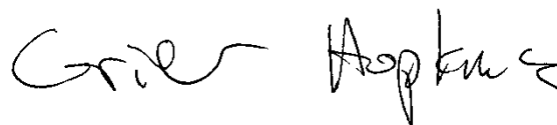
Representative Ivy Spohnholz



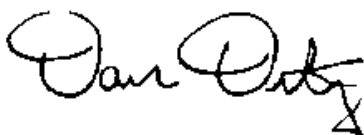
Representative Harriet Drummond



Representative Andy Josephson



Representative Grier Hopkins



Representative Dan Ortiz

CC: Adam Crum, Department of Health & Social Services, Commissioner  
Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer  
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