



Governor Michael J. Dunleavy
STATE OF ALASKA

October 6, 2021

The Honorable Tiffany Zulkosky
House Health & Social Services Committee Co-Chair
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 416
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

The Honorable Liz Snyder
House Health & Social Services Committee Co-Chair
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 421
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Delivered Electronically

Dear Co-Chairs Zulkosky and Snyder:

I write in response to your October 5, 2021 letter requesting I exercise the Alaska Disaster Act to put the state in a 30-day disaster posture. Your reasons for this request included the current conditions of the COVID-19 virus in Alaska, as well as statistics about health outcomes to our residents, and available therapeutic and health resources.

After allowing the Disaster Declaration to expire in February 2021, the Legislature passed House Bill 76 (HB 76) in April. HB 76 was more than an extension of disaster conditions in Alaska. My Administration and the Legislature recognized that Alaska was one of the few states whose disaster laws were missing an intermediate level of powers to address health crises. The legislation empowered the Commissioner of Health and Social Services to issue Public Health Emergency Orders that would flatten regulations and restrictions in order to deploy necessary health response resources. Immediately after I signed HB 76, Commissioner Adam Crum issued a Public Health Emergency Order. The State of Alaska has been under this intermediary position since May 1.

Alaska is facing challenges related to COVID-19. The State of Alaska is responding to those challenges. The largest challenge is the lack of staff in our healthcare facilities due to a variety of reasons. To date, the majority of the nearly 500 healthcare specialists contracted through the federal General Services Administration have come to Alaska and are working in our hospitals.

This Administration has ordered \$2 million worth of at-home rapid tests so parents can test their kids before going to school to minimize COVID transmission in schools. Additionally, my

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Department of Health and Social Services has funded EMS EMS to implement Mobile Integrated Health programs to transport patients to alternate destinations and support decompression of hospitals. These types of resources help with the staffing and load leveling our hospitals.

Alaska was one of the first states in the country to make monoclonal antibody infusions widely available. As of today, 36 sites have an active account to receive direct shipments of monoclonal antibodies. We are still meeting our goal of having a one-week supply in Alaska for residents' needs.

Vaccinations have increased since the summer. The steady uptick in vaccinations is bringing Alaska closer to the national average, after leading the country earlier this year. Once our most vulnerable, elders and those with underlying health conditions, received the vaccine, our state opened vaccinations to anyone over the age of 12 who were eligible and wanted to be vaccinated. Last week 2,385 Alaskans got vaccinated.

The Delta variant has led to an uptick in cases and hospitalizations, and the loss of life. Even with this surge, however, Alaska experienced some of the lowest loss of life, both in per capita and absolute terms, than anywhere in the nation. Any life lost is a tragedy, but the people of this state have weathered the COVID-19 virus better than most.

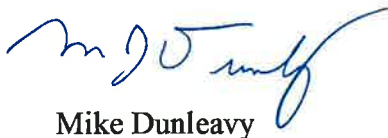
Case counts are high, but we are starting to see a leveling off this week. We do need to watch the data closely. This Administration will continue to be transparent and explain its response to COVID-19, and put those facts in proper context.

The very short timeframe that I, from a state level, imposed restrictions on the movement of our residents was in the spring of 2020, when the prospect of therapeutics and a vaccine were distant ideas, and the impact on our hospitals was an open question. We have ample supplies of therapeutics and vaccines. We have healthcare workers. We have more resources coming. Nearly 60 percent of people in this state have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. The world today is completely different than March of 2020, and we should adapt to it.

Exercising the Disaster Act does not give our team any more health tools than what they need and are using right now. Masking is, as I have stated, a local issue best left to local leaders. As for mandating vaccines, that is an act I will not contemplate.

I thank you for your suggestions, and ask you to take these facts into account.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Dunleavy", is written over the printed name.

Mike Dunleavy
Governor

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The Honorable Liz Snyder

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cc: The Honorable Matt Claman, District 21, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, District 35, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Zack Fields, District 20, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Calvin Schrage, District 25, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Sara Hannan, District 33, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Adam Wool, District 5, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Ivy Spohnholz, District 16, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Harriet Drummond, District 18, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Grier Hopkins, District 4, Alaska House of Representatives
The Honorable Dan Ortiz, District 36, Alaska House of Representatives