

CITY OF UNALASKA
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February 5, 2021

Senator David Wilson
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau AK, 99801

Re: Disaster Emergency Declaration

Dear Senator Wilson:

Governor Dunleavy's current emergency declaration is set to expire on February 14 at 11:59 pm. SB56 was filed to extend the declaration until September 2021, or until the Commissioner of DHSS declares, there is no longer public health threat whichever happens earlier. This will better enable a continued coordinated approach statewide and allow for the successful Health Orders to remain in place. This coordinated approach has proved to be successful thus far, and now is not the time to let our guard down. The pandemic is not over yet and we still require the State's leadership and partnership.

Unalaska is a diverse island community that includes essential workers supporting the International Port of Dutch Harbor, the number one fishing port in the nation, elders, and those living in congregate settings. Due to the unique challenges we face in our island community, our local entities have come together, uniting in our efforts to provide a coordinated response to the pandemic.

Together, we have set up an isolation site to house seafood industry workers who contract the virus. Referrals are provided through the Iliulik Family and Health Services (IFHS). We have used the facility regularly with fishing vessels and processing plant outbreaks. The City bears the cost of utilities, rent, insurance, and cleaning. We are thankful for industry and business partners who support the operational efforts and expenses. Our shared goal is to keep the number one fishing port in the nation running.

The City of Unalaska has enacted local measures focused on protecting the health of our community members, businesses, and industry; in not overwhelming the health care system. We have worked with the Unalaska City School District and local businesses in efforts to keep their services operational and safe. These efforts have been designed to complement the statewide approach to meet our specific needs.

Qawalangin Tribe of Unalaska, IFHS, Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, and the City are working together to advocate for more vaccines for our community. The distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine remains slow. Vaccine allotments based on regional population alone do not effectively account for our remote location, limited access to health care, seasonal population influx for industry, and the significant number of individuals living in close quarters and congregant settings.

We are doing our part, and request the continued support of the State in responding to this public heal crisis. We urge you to support SB 56 and extend the State's declaration of emergency. The pandemic is not over yet and we cannot let our guard down. Thank you for your continued leadership.

Sincerely,


Mayor Vincent M. Tuitakoff, Sr


Erin Reinders, City Manager