



February 12, 2021

Dear Co-Chair Stedman, Co-Chair Bishop, and Honorable Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) to encourage rapid passage of Senate Bill 56 - EXTENDING COVID 19 DISASTER EMERGENCY.

Small businesses across Alaska are significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These impacts range from sickness or death (when owners or workers have contracted the virus) to economic devastation from restrictive health mandates designed to control virus spread. Small businesses, and their employees, are threatened by both a reduction in health care capacity and increased local health mandates.

SB 56 incorporates key policy provisions designed to expand state medical capacity and lessen restrictions on commerce, including:

- Suspension of certain fees (business and professional licenses)
- Suspension of statute to allow for curbside alcohol sales
- Expanding telehealth and telemedicine capabilities
- Streamlining fingerprinting for certain occupations
- Allowing online sales for charitable gaming
- Suspension of insurance requirements

Governor Dunleavy has responsibly used powers granted to him to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Emergency health and welfare policies have suspended rules impeding healthcare expansion while providing funding for critical medical infrastructure. The emergency suspension of rules promoting commerce and economic activity have kept small businesses viable as they respond to a patchwork of local health mandates. If the legislature does not extend the emergency declaration, small businesses will face a new round of local health mandates as health care capacity is reduced. Small businesses need the latitude they currently enjoy under the emergency declaration to keep their doors open and their work force employed.

Failure to pass SB 56 before the disaster declaration expires imperils the physical and economic health of Alaskan small businesses. NFIB encourages members of Senate Finance to take swift action and prevent further economic harm to small businesses by passing SB 56 from committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thor Stacey", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thor Stacey

State Director

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