

March 19, 2021

Alaska State Legislature
120 4th Street
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Subject: Support Extension of Alaska COVID-19 Emergency Declaration

Dear Legislators,

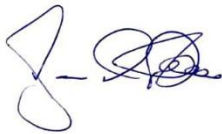
With our State nearing, but not having reached, the end of the crisis portion of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fairbanks Economic Development encourages passage of legislation reinstating Alaska's COVID-19 Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration.

Though not without much challenge and hardship, judicious use of the tools, resources and allowances made possible by past Declarations have allowed Alaska to successfully avoid the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have allowed Alaska to create an interagency Unified Command, suspend regulations and requirements which might have impeded healthcare delivery, empowered healthcare officials to prioritize the allocation of resources to the most at risk or need, and, perhaps most importantly from an economic development perspective, ensured Alaska the greatest possible access to acutely necessary federally offered funds and assistance.

A caveat to FEDC's support regards the airline industry. Information from our industry partners indicates Alaska's major airports were stretched to capacity with testing during 2020 – a time of greatly diminished air travel. Therefore, with flight rates anticipated to be much increased in 2021, and though it would still encourage a regimen where guests provide proof of negative-test or vaccination at their point of embarkation, FEDC would recommend Alaska not reimpose an in-state testing mandate for inbound travelers.

With the potential of COVID-19 to damage the lives, livelihoods and institutions of Alaskans not yet spent, now is not the time to relax either our vigilance or efforts in its regard. Therefore, FEDC encourages the Legislature to reinstate Alaska's COVID-19 Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration, and return to itself and the Administration the fullest possible ability and means to move Alaska expeditiously and successfully into the true "post-COVID" era.

Respectfully,



Jim Dodson
President & CEO
Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation