



February 18, 2021

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky Co-Chair  
Representative Liz Snyder Co-Chair  
House Health and Social Services Committee  
Juneau AK, 99801

**RE: House Bill 76 -- Extending COVID-19 Disaster Emergency**

Dear Co-Chairs Zulkosky and Snyder:

Alaska Emergency Medicine Associates (AEMA) is a group of emergency medicine physicians serving Alaskans in Anchorage. We are writing to voice our strong support of HB76.

As front line emergency physicians we have seen this pandemic from all sides. We have cared for those with COVID, the worried young as well as the frail and frightened headed to the ICU. We have sat and spoken to the anxious parents, and comforted children acting out from boredom. We have provided comfort to the elderly facing health challenges alone. I say this to emphasize that the hurt of this pandemic, and the steps taken to control it, are not lost on us. We have made impressive strides in the battle against COVID. We have adopted new treatment measures, embraced PPE and masks, and hunkered down. Our response as a state has been stand out, it is our utmost wish to continue in this fashion.

Widespread access to testing has been crucial in our response to COVID-19, giving us data about community spread and hot spots in need of attention. The creation of off site testing centers, such as the one used in Anchorage, do more than provide data. They help siphon away stable patients, removing pressure from local clinics and emergency departments. Similarly moving outpatient visits to telehealth has allowed us to continue care for all while minimizing risk of patient travel and keeping healthcare workers safe. The widening of off site testing and telehealth was only available to us as a state because of federal flexibilities in the form of CMS waivers. If we are no longer in a state of disaster, then these blanket waivers will no longer apply to our state, thus prematurely terminating our current testing and telehealth infrastructure.

Now is not the time to allow complacency to thwart our response. Failure to continue the public health emergency disaster declaration will threaten our ability to continue large volume testing, vaccination programs, and telehealth visits, which have been immeasurably helpful in the past 9 months.

Please do not limit our ability to continue to respond to this emergency in the best way we can.

Vote to support HB76 and extend the emergency disaster declaration to September 2021.

Sincerely,

Helen Adams, MD  
Legislative coordinator  
AEMA

cc: Miles Baker, Legislative Director  
Adam Crum, Commissioner Department of Health and Social Services  
Suzanne Cunningham, Legislative Liaison Department of Health and Social Services