



**FRESENIUS
MEDICAL CARE**

February 8, 2021

Senator David Wilson, Chairman
Senate Health & Social Services Committee
State Capital Building
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Re: Senate Bill 56, Extending COVID-19 Disaster Declaration

Dear Senator Wilson:

On behalf of Fresenius Medical Care, this letter is to express support for SB 56, to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration.

Fresenius serves 330 people with End Stage Renal Disease at our dialysis facilities in Fairbanks, Wasilla, Anchorage, Soldotna, and Juneau. These facilities and their dedicated frontline healthcare workers provide life-sustaining dialysis treatments three times a week. Those patients include persons who are COVID-positive and presumptive positive.

Fresenius has been committed to serving COVID-positive and presumptive positive patients during this pandemic by dialyzing them in designated isolation areas within some of our clinics. Our ability to continue to do so assures that hospital beds are used for those patients who need them most.

Our ability to serve patients relies upon the availability of dialysis nurses and other licensed professionals. Dialysis is a specialty area, requiring personnel that meet required training and experience levels in addition to having their state professional license. Maintaining staffing levels outside of a pandemic is hard enough in Alaska, where there is limited availability of qualified individuals.

The public health emergency has allowed us to work with state medical licensing boards to establish temporary courtesy licenses that are available during the declaration. To lose the ability to expedite access to properly trained and license personnel in the face of continued exposure to the COVID virus creates a situation that is, at best, difficult. Thank you for this opportunity to express support for SB56, extending the health emergency.

Sincerely,

Wendy Funk Schrag, LMSW, ACSW
Vice President State Government Affairs
316.841.5245
Wendy.schrag@fmc-na.com



CITY OF WASILLA

MAYOR GLENDA D. LEDFORD

290 E. Herning Avenue

Wasilla, AK 99654-7091

Phone: (907) 373-9055

Fax: (907) 373-9096

February 8, 2021

Senator David Wilson
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801
Email: Senator.David.Wilson@akleg.gov

RE: Senate Bill 56 | Renewal of Declaration of Emergency for COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Senator Wilson,

The City of Wasilla respectfully request the support of the Legislature in renewing the State's Declaration of Emergency for the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Though the end of the pandemic can be viewed to be on the horizon, the City of Wasilla believes there is value in extending the Declaration of Emergency for COVID-19 Pandemic until September 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a significant public health event, affecting the well-being of our Alaskan citizens and the economic stability of our communities.

A Disaster Declaration provides the foundation for our local governments to effectively provide an emergency response while affording access to State and Federal aid. Local communities need the support and strength of such an extension to assist in continuing emergency operations while preparing for the vaccination phase of emergency. Furthermore, a Disaster Declaration provides for the infrastructure necessary to act in response if required; removing restrictions which allow the State to enact effectively.

The City of Wasilla is grateful for the support and persistent effort of the Legislature, the Governor, the Department of Health and Social Services, and particularly the Division of Public Health who has wholly provided consistent and practical leadership during this challenging time.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration in supporting the renewal of the State's Declaration of Emergency for the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Sincerely,

Mayor Glenda D. Ledford
City of Wasilla

Cc: file



Blood Bank of Alaska
Helping Alaska patients in need

1215 Airport Heights Dr. • Anchorage, AK 99508 • Tel: 907-222-5600 • Fax: 907-222-5683 • www.bloodbankofalaska.org

February 8, 2021

The Honorable David Wilson, MBA
Alaska State Senate
State Capital Room 121
Juneau, Alaska 99801

*****Transmitted via E-mail*****

Re: Senate Bill 56, Extending COVID-19 Disaster Declaration

Dear Senator Wilson:

I am writing to you today to respectfully request your consideration and support for SB 56, to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. No doubt your background in Health Service Administration provides an appreciation for the magnitude of the logistical effort we are currently engaged in addressing COVID-19 in Alaska.

Nothing like the current pandemic has occurred in Alaska, or the United States, in over 100 years. To say the obvious, these are unusual times. A thoughtful and committed response by our leadership is paramount to assure the health of Alaskans.

Without an extension of the emergency declaration currently in place, our state will quite possibly lose the hard-won infrastructure for testing and vaccines currently being provided to us through the efforts of our National Guard. We will also lose the flexibilities currently enjoyed by hospitals in their effective response to COVID-19, along with the ability to access and effectively use telehealth, and virtual medical visits. Rural communities will be especially hard hit.

I will be the first to tell you how tired I am of having to deal with COVID-19. Wearing masks, business restriction and shutdowns, school closures, and personal inconveniences are wearisome. All of us wish to see the current pandemic relegated to history. That is why I feel so strongly about the essential need for the current emergency declaration to be extended.

The public health emergency declaration has provided the ability for Alaska to take important and necessary steps during the pandemic, to remove obstacles that unnecessarily burn time and money, and potentially jeopardizes the lives and well-being of communities across Alaska. This is about the best interests of the people of Alaska. I respectfully ask for your support for SB 56, to extend Alaska's public health emergency declaration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RWS", written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Scanlon
Chief Executive Officer

RWS/



February 8, 2021

The Honorable David Wilson
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 56 "Extending COVID-19 Disaster Emergency"

Dear Senator Wilson and Members of the HSS Committee,

Fairweather, LLC is an Alaskan company, having operated here for over 45 years. We provide support services to many companies who have remote operations spanning over many different industries. One of our core services is providing remote medical support.

Fairweather, LLC would like to express our support for Senate Bill 56 and the extension of the COVID-19 Disaster Declaration until September 2021.

While Alaska has made great progress in dealing with the current COVID-19 pandemic, there remains significant concerns over its continued impact to our state's overall health. Since COVID-19 has taken hold, our services have been and continue to be, focused on responding to the needs of our community by providing COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. We are working with many different stake holders to offer these services and feel that there is great need from the community to continue. The extension of the Disaster Declaration will provide necessary tools for the state to continue managing the impacts of COVID-19.

This past weekend, Fairweather was able to help vaccinate over 1800 eligible individuals to protect them against COVID-19 at one of the State declared Alternative Care Sites. This is great work that is being done to provide these vaccines and we very much wish to continue working with the State of Alaska, Municipality of Anchorage and Department of Health and Social Services. We applaud the work and support of the Legislature, Governor, Department of Health and Social Services and the Division of Public Health during this challenging time.

We ask that you please support and pass Senate Bill 56. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Kind Regards,

Sally V. Marinucci
Business Manager
Fairweather, LLC
Sally.marinucci@fairweather.com
907-267-4605



February 8, 2021

32nd Alaska Legislature
Senator David Wilson, Chair
Senate Health & Social Services Committee
senator.david.wilson@akleg.gov

Dear Senator Wilson,

The Petersburg Borough Assembly supports Governor Dunleavy's request to extend Alaska's current Declaration of a Public Health Disaster Emergency, through Senate Bill 56, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current State of Alaska contract extension with the Petersburg Borough to provide airport travel testing that allows Petersburg to meet the State Interstate and International Travel Health Order #6, is weighted to be contingent upon the State's Disaster Declaration. If the Declaration is terminated, the contract for testing will also be terminated. The testing program at our airport has been instrumental in detecting COVID-19 in passengers arriving to Petersburg. The coronavirus has been controlled and contained in these cases by identifying COVID positive individuals and allowing local medical and public health officials to perform contact tracing and isolate the cases. Without the testing program, there is certainty that future passengers that may not know of their infection will be able to enter the community without restriction and spread the virus to the detriment of our population and medical facilities.

Petersburg has depended on many State Health Orders during the pandemic. Travel testing and Seafood Industry mitigation plans have been vital in protecting our remote population and ensuring that our primary economic driver, commercial fishing, remains in operation without negative impacts from the coronavirus. Without the Declaration and Health Orders, we would have been at the mercy of the virus for the entire processing season. The same will be true in 2021 if the protective Health Orders are rescinded and the virus is allowed to propagate in our processing facilities and fishing fleet. An important step in Petersburg's economic recovery is to make sure that our businesses and industry can remain open and operational until the pandemic is over.

Borough Administration
PO Box 329, Petersburg, AK 99833 – Phone (907) 772-4425 Fax (907) 772-3759
www.ci.petersburg.ak.us

The State Emergency Operations Center has worked to exhaustion during the pandemic to support the individual communities dealing with the impacts of COVID-19. The SEOC has provided guidance to local EOCs on State Health Orders and advice for supplying communities with personal protective equipment. Additionally, they have provided information and planning for the next phases of the statewide response. If Governor Dunleavy's Disaster Declaration is terminated, it is believed the SEOC will stand down and the resources that have been available across the state will dwindle, leaving local EOCs to fend for themselves without the level of support and leadership currently available.

Many State departments are focused on meeting the goals and objectives of the Disaster Declaration. One of the current goals may be the most important to date – distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines to our population – which is facilitated by the Department of Health and Social Services in Alaska. Lack of a Disaster Declaration shifts the focus of this department to business as usual and takes away from the mission to vaccinate our residents and truly arrive at the end of the pandemic.

The Disaster Declaration allows for response and provides the necessary infrastructure to do so. It removes restrictions and allows the State to act effectively to meet Alaska's needs. The Declaration prioritizes Alaska's economic recovery and the movement of critical infrastructure, helps to implement workplace safety protocols, and promotes safe travel into and within Alaska.

Through the diligence and efforts of the State of Alaska and our local EOC, Petersburg's COVID-19 positive case numbers have been low. Our children are enjoying in-person school and our businesses are open.

Alaska is at the forefront of the nation regarding COVID-19 testing, voluntary vaccination, and implementation of economic recovery measures at the local level. We encourage this Legislature to pass an extension of the Declaration of a Public Health Disaster Emergency so we Alaskans have the tools to face the challenges before us.

Respectfully,



Mark Jensen
Mayor

Cc: Senator Bert Stedman
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

Jody Simpson

From: Martha Fleming [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 4:47 PM
To: Sen. Peter Micciche; Rep. Ben Carpenter
Cc: Sen. David Wilson; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. Mia Costello; Sen. Lora Reinbold; Sen. Tom Begich
Subject: Extending emergency declaration

Dear Senator Micciche and Representative Carpenter:

I am a constituent writing to urge support of the extension of the state's Public Health Emergency Disaster Declaration. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep connection between our state's economic and public health. Allowing the emergency declaration to expire will have strong consequences to health care workers, hospitals, and the most vulnerable Alaskans.

I serve on the Providence Seward Hospital Board and I am deeply concerned about the conversation surrounding the extension of the emergency declaration. Simply put, the emergency declaration allows hospitals and providers to adjust to community need. Instead of screening symptomatic patients in common areas, hospitals can create COVID-19 triage areas, thereby keeping non-COVID patients and caregivers safer. Home monitoring programs have been stood up, allowing COVID-19 patients to be treated safely at home. This improves health outcomes while not overrunning hospital capacity. Local governments can access emergency aid and social service organizations can receive funding to assist Alaskans facing economic hardships.

Creating a piecemeal of legislative solutions will only cost us time and introduce more instability to an already stressed environment.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge the extension of Alaska's Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration.

Sincerely,

Martha Fleming

[REDACTED]

Cc: Members of the Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Jody Simpson

From: Tim Cudney <tim.cudney@fairweather.com>
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 4:57 PM
To: Sen. Lora Reinbold
Cc: Sen. David Wilson; Sen. Mia Costello; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. Tom Begich
Subject: Please Extend Public Health Emergency Disaster Declaration.

Dear Senator Reinbold,

I am a constituent writing to urge support of the extension of the state's Public Health Emergency Disaster Declaration. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep connection between our state's economic and public health. Allowing the emergency declaration to expire will have strong consequences to health care workers, hospitals, and the most vulnerable Alaskans.

I work remotely whereas the workforce is limited now due to COVID issues, getting people prescreen prior to sending them north is paramount, as well, concerned about the conversation surrounding the extension of the emergency declaration. Simply put, the emergency declaration allows hospitals and providers to adjust to community needs. Instead of screening symptomatic patients in common areas, hospitals can create COVID-19 triage areas, thereby keeping non-COVID patients and caregivers safer. Home monitoring programs have been stood up, allowing COVID-19 patients to be treated safely at home. This improves health outcomes while not overrunning hospital capacity. Local governments can access emergency aid and social service organizations can receive funding to assist Alaskans facing economic hardships.

Creating a piecemeal of legislative solutions will only cost us time and introduce more instability to an already stressed environment.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge the **extension of Alaska's Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration.**

Sincerely,

Tim Cudney | Director
Deadhorse Aviation Center, LLC
Direct (907) 267-4614 | Mobile (907) 529-1437
301 Calista Ct.
Anchorage, AK 99518
tim.cudney@fairweather.com

Deadhorse Airport (PASC)
"Put Safety First, with Fairweather"

--

v/r

Tim Cudney | Director
Deadhorse Aviation Center, LLC

(907) 267-4614 Office

"Put Safety First, with Fairweather"



Alaska Pharmacists Association

February 8, 2021

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Senator David Wilson
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801
Senator.David.Wilson@akleg.gov

Re: AKPhA Support of Senate Bill 56 "Extending COVID-19 Disaster Declaration"

Dear Senator Wilson,

The Alaska Pharmacists Association (AKPhA) represents nearly 300 pharmacists and technicians statewide. Our members work front-line to provide COVID-19 testing and vaccinations among many other services to improve the health of Alaskans.

AKPhA would like to express our support for SB 56 and the extension of the COVID-19 Disaster Declaration until September 2021. The Disaster Declaration supported Alaska pharmacies, pharmacists, and technicians in a number of ways. These include bringing federal financial support and assistance into Alaska to support our businesses and healthcare providers, providing regulatory flexibility to ensure maximum access to safe care, allowing expanded telehealth capabilities, and ensuring payment for some pharmacy-provided services including COVID testing and vaccinations.

The pandemic continues to impact the physical, mental, and financial well-being of Alaskans. The extension of the Disaster Declaration provides the resources our members and state need to continue to manage and mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. If SB 56 is not passed, the state risks losing pharmacists, technicians, and pharmacies as key players in the fight to end the pandemic through testing and vaccinations. SB 56 is critical to Alaska's healthcare system; it will allow us to continue to lead the nation with our COVID-19 response.

We applaud the continued efforts of the state and local leadership in making decisions that protect Alaskans. We look forward to and stand ready to continue the fight to end the pandemic. AKPhA strongly supports SB 56 and urges lawmakers to quickly pass the bill.

Respectfully,

Ashley Schaber, PharmD, MBA, BCPS
President, Alaska Pharmacists Association

CC: Governor Dunleavy
Commissioner Adam Crum
Senate Health & Social Services Committee

E-mail: akphrmcy@alaska.net

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Member of the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties

Addendum: Acting in the Public Interest

As we approach the necessary extension of the State's disaster declaration – which would allow the State to continue acting quickly in response to the public health emergency and corresponding economic crisis – the Alaska Municipal League would like to clarify one of the misperceptions that we have heard.

Local governments do not benefit financially from a disaster declaration in place.

Yes, local governments received 45% of the State's allocation of the federal assistance provided by Congress through the CARES Act Coronavirus Relief Fund. That formula is consistent with U.S. Treasury's guidance, and the allocated amount can be tracked via the Division of Community and Regional Affairs' website at

<https://dcced.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/b1abdcc16cad409383d0d43af4922cab>

The distribution of those funds, however, do not have anything to do with the State's disaster declaration. They were proposed for distribution through an RPL process that was ratified by the Legislature. While outside the norm, this was not the result of having the declaration in place.

Just to be clear, the receipt of CRF did not make local governments whole during this crisis. The reality is that those funds came with onerous restrictions and the majority of the funding was distributed back into communities in the form of economic support to businesses and impacted resident. Local governments bore – and continue to bear – considerable costs of managing through this crisis, spending down from emergency reserves, delaying capital and maintenance projects, or even reducing services provided so that they can meet those needs.

Similarly, the Alaska Municipal League (AML) does not benefit financially from the disaster declaration, nor are we advocating for its extension out of an interest in either our or our members' financial benefit. There is no financial benefit.

Federal funds, where they exist – and they do, through FEMA, and Congressional-approved relief – are tied to the nation's disaster declaration, which was put in place under the previous President and has been kept in place by the current Administration. These funds do not rely on a State declaration for local governments to access.

Our support – and that of our members – rests fundamentally out of concern for the public interest, and the duty of the State to provide public health and welfare as directed in Alaska's Constitution.

The extension of the State's disaster declaration contributes to that health and welfare, providing the State with the tools necessary to act swiftly in response to an ever-evolving situation. Alaskans health and well-being depend on State action, and we know that action contributes positively even to mental health. Alaskans can rest assured with this declaration in place, avoiding the uncertainty of a State limited in its ability to respond to these crises.

Jody Simpson

From: Alys Bowman [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 8:50 PM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: Support Alaska's emergency declaration to allow federal flexibilities to meet patient needs

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing today to urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits.

The emergency declaration has nothing to do with mask mandates, hunker downs, school schedules, or restaurant closures. These are all matters of local control, and they will continue with or without the declaration.

Alaska is doing much better in the battle against COVID, but we are not past this yet. We are still busy taking care of COVID patients and caring for Alaskans' delayed health care needs while mounting an intensive vaccine campaign. Please support SB 56 and extend the emergency declaration so we can continue to work together to get through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Alys Bowman
[REDACTED]



Alaska Primary Care ASSOCIATION

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Senate President Micciche
Alaska Senate
State Capitol Room 111
Juneau, AK 99801

RE: Senate Bill 56 to Extend the COVID-19 Public Health Disaster Emergency Order

Dear Senate President Micciche,

The Alaska Primary Care Association (APCA) and Alaska's Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) submit this letter to strongly urge you to support SB 56 and its swift passage to extend the Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration Order (PHE) to continue vital administrative, regulatory and statutory flexibilities that have allowed Alaska to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PHE is critical, allowing continuity of policy and key waivers and regulatory supports for FQHC safety net providers and the patients they serve in rural and urban communities.

The high rate of COVID-19 cases statewide has impacted FQHC service delivery and the patients they serve. Alaska's 28 community health centers (including one Look Alike), serve over 115,000 patients, the vast majority of whom experience a range of challenges in accessing health care that include long distances to local providers, cost of care, transportation, language, and culture. In Alaska, over half of FQHC patients are racial/ethnic minorities, and a majority are low-income.

Your swift action to pass SB 56 and extend the PHE will provide FQHCs continued access to critical new tools and flexibilities needed, and will help save lives while offering cost saving preventative care, testing, vaccinations, and whole person care to address chronic health conditions which continue to plague Alaskans during this pandemic.

Fiscal Relief and Opportunity

The State PHE permits Alaska to receive future federal relief funds as we work to address the pandemic while recovering and rebuilding our economy. The financing plan outlined in SB56 allows for timely appropriations and authorizations necessary to respond to an emergency and requires timely expenditure reporting to the legislature. SB56 will also provide:

- Support from the national guard on testing and vaccine
- Flexibilities for COVID response in FQHCs and hospitals
- Ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits
- Occupational and professional licensing opportunities
- Fingerprinting requirements for health care providers
- Access to critical federal stabilization funds

Alaska FQHCs have been on the front lines of Alaska's pandemic emergency response work. Prior PHEs gave way to the following actions, which warrant continued support:

- **Vaccinations:** FQHCs are actively vaccinating patients and community health providers in collaboration with the state tier system. An additional component of their work is to reach patients who experience barriers in getting a vaccination due to lack of internet and transportation to access vaccination programs, and language and cultural hesitancy issues.
- **Telehealth:** With emergency waiver support, FQHCs successfully developed and implemented new systems of care through telehealth. With CHCs now operating at full pre-COVID levels of service, telehealth is more important than ever in providing patients with safe, timely access to care away from a clinical setting. These visits account for an average of ¼ of total patient visits.
- **Testing:** FQHCs continue to provide their patients and communities access to both rapid and PCR testing. Testing will continue to be a key focus of FQHCs in the coming months as a considerable portion of the population waits for vaccinations, and as we understand more about variant COVID strains.
- **Contact Tracing:** FQHCs and APCA collaborate with the State of Alaska to provide up to contact tracing services at both the state and local community levels.

The pandemic and economic recession have taken a financial toll on health centers at a time when they are looked to as an essential source of care for Alaska's low-income patients who are at high risk of COVID-19 infection and poor health outcomes. SB56 and the PHE extension will provide a critical avenue for health care providers to innovate and respond in the face of these challenges and our recovery ahead.

Alaska FQHCs and APCA remain stalwart and ready to serve and continue our partnership with the State of Alaska. We respectfully request that you support SB56 to extend the Public Health Disaster Emergency Order.

Thank you for your leadership and support.

Sincerely,



Nancy Merriman
Executive Director



February 4, 2021

The Honorable David Wilson
Chairman, Senate Health & Social Services Committee
Alaska Senate
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau, AK 99801
Via Email: Senator.David.Wilson@akleg.gov

RE: Senate Bill 56 to Extend the COVID-19 Public Health Disaster Emergency

Dear Chairman Wilson,

The extension of the public health disaster emergency (PHE) is vital for administrative, regulatory, and statutory flexibilities that have allowed Alaska to respond quickly and successfully to the COVID-19 pandemic. Alaska is leading the way in responding to the pandemic and it is vital that we continue to do so. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 56 and its swift passage to continue these flexibilities.

Copper River Native Association (CRNA) is located in Southcentral Alaska serving five compacted Tribes, Native Village of Cantwell, Gakona, Gulkana, Kluti-Kaah and Tazlina. The service area can cover 50 miles in one direction and another 50 miles in the opposite direction providing services in our remote communities are create a hardship on people needing the services. CRNA has utilized the COVID-19 Public Health Disaster Emergency to meet the needs of the people we serve in the most quick and efficient response possible. Partnering with the Tribal and State entities have assisted in the response to COVID-19. The following flexibilities will continue CRNA effort to stop the spread of COVID-19 and keep our community safe in this pandemic.

The State's PHE has allowed for a series of flexibilities that have allowed for Governor Dunleavy's administration, specifically the Department of Health & Social Services and the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, as well as health care providers and facilities to respond effectively to COVID-19. A few of the important flexibilities made available by the PHE are:

- **Vaccine distribution** – The powers authorized under the State PHE allow the governor to control the distribution of scarce resources, including scarce COVID-19 vaccines. Without the State PHE, the Department of Health and Social Services will not be able to distribute the COVID-19 vaccine using the State Vaccination Distribution Plan which prioritizes vulnerable populations, such as our Elders and our first responders.

- **Vaccine administration** –The State PHE does not just support the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines, it also provides essential flexibility to allow more provider types to be able to administer vaccines. This includes the ability to deploy the Alaska National Guard for contact tracing efforts and vaccine administration.
- **Provider licensing flexibilities** – Under the PHE, providers have received expedited, limited-use licenses that have reinforced Alaska’s health care workforce during a time of severe strain. Alaska has fewer health care professionals per capita than most states, and there was a chronic need for providers in Alaska even before the pandemic.
- **Telehealth provision and reimbursement** – The State’s PHE also allows patients to see providers for telehealth services without first having an in-person visit. This has been important to keep patients and providers safe during the pandemic, but it has also allowed providers to bill third party payors, providing much needed funding to clinics who have seen patient visits decline dramatically during the pandemic.
- **Continued provision of medication assisted treatment for patients with substance use disorders** – 12 AAC 40.943 allows a provider to see and prescribe controlled substances used as part of medication assisted treatment for substance use disorders via telemedicine during a declared disaster emergency without conducting required in-person exams. This flexibility has been used by rural providers to ensure patients do not have to go without treatment and can remain safe during the pandemic.
- **Alternate Care Sites** – The State’s PHE has been a vital component for standing up Alternate Care Sites (ACS) used for testing and treating patients for COVID-19 in non-traditional locations based on their clinical needs. For example, this flexibility allowed the State to establish a field hospital in King Salmon during the fishing season to help ensure local providers had the staffing and capacity to identify and treat COVID-19 in migrant workers. Generally, it has allowed for hospitals to establish an ACS that separates COVID-19 related care and treatment from non-COVID-19 care, keeping patients and providers safe.
- **Quarantining Sites** – The State PHE also has made it possible to quickly stand up Quarantining Sites for COVID-19 patients during their isolation period. Without the State PHE, it would become significantly more difficult to stand these sites up, especially in our rural hub communities. This flexibility also supports local hospitality businesses which have suffered greatly due to decreased tourism during the pandemic.
- **Travel** – The State PHE also made it possible to limit travel to Alaska and to our vulnerable rural, remote communities. These limitations have continued to protect rural communities in Alaska, especially those with community-based water and sanitation facilities, which face an increased risk of community-based transmission. Many of our rural communities cannot access the treatment options available at acute care facilities in a timely manner, making prevention from exposure to COVID-19 vital to individual and public health.

The State's PHE and flexibilities are distinct from the public health powers of local governments and the federal government, but necessary to allow the State to respond effectively to the pandemic. We urge swift passage of Senate Bill 56 by the Alaska State Legislature.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact me at 822-5241.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Rude', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Rude, CEO

CC: Senate Health & Social Services Committee Members
Alaska Senate
Alaska House of Representatives

Jody Simpson

From: Rick Fox <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 7:10 PM
To: Sen. David Wilson
Subject: Urgent

Dear Senator Wilson,

Our Alaskan company since 1976, Fairweather, is one of several providers delivering vaccines, providing Covid 19 Rapid Tests and PCR Tests for the public.

We have over 50 Alaskans employed to deliver these services to the community, about half of these are medical professionals - the other half are like many of us, trying to get through this and grateful to have meaningful work in service to our community. We receive many thank you notes every day as people get vaccinated or get tests that allow them to see a doctor or travel.

We have been vaccinating 900 grateful people per day at the Alaska Airlines Center in Anchorage. Most of these so far have been the old folks like me. They have been very happy to get these vaccinations and tell us so with heartfelt emotions.

Please help us keep these services going, our community safe and our people working. Vote to extend the Governor's Emergency orders. We need it.

Sincerely,
Rick Fox

CEO of Fairweather LLC

Office 907.562.2111 | 

301 Calista Court

Anchorage, Alaska 99518

Email: rick.fox@chouest.com

Jody Simpson

From: Gretchen Strawn <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, February 08, 2021 6:00 PM
To: Rep. DeLena Johnson
Cc: Sen. David Wilson; Sen. Lora Reinbold; Sen. Mia Costello; Sen. Shelley Hughes; Sen. Tom Begich
Subject: Public Health Emergency Disaster Declaration

Dear Senator Hughes and Representative Johnson,

I am a constituent writing to urge support of the extension of the state's Public Health Emergency Disaster Declaration. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep connection between our state's economic and public health. Allowing the emergency declaration to expire will have strong consequences to health care workers, hospitals, and the most vulnerable Alaskans.

I am deeply concerned about the conversation surrounding the extension of the emergency declaration. Simply put, the emergency declaration allows hospitals and providers to adjust to community need. Instead of screening symptomatic patients in common areas, hospitals can create COVID-19 triage areas, thereby keeping non-COVID patients and caregivers safer. Home monitoring programs have been stood up, allowing COVID-19 patients to be treated safely at home. This improves health outcomes while not overrunning hospital capacity. Local governments can access emergency aid and social service organizations can receive funding to assist Alaskans facing economic hardships.

Creating a piecemeal of legislative solutions will only cost us time and introduce more instability to an already stressed environment.

I fervently urge the extension of Alaska's Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration.

Sincerely,

Gretchen E. Strawn
Palmer AK

Cc: Members of the Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Jody Simpson

From: Jennifer Opsut <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2021 9:11 AM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: Support Alaska's emergency declaration to allow federal flexibilities to meet patient needs

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing today to urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits.

The emergency declaration has nothing to do with mask mandates, hunker downs, school schedules, or restaurant closures. These are all matters of local control, and they will continue with or without the declaration.

Alaska is doing much better in the battle against COVID, but we are not past this yet. We are still busy taking care of COVID patients and caring for Alaskans' delayed health care needs while mounting an intensive vaccine campaign. Please support SB 56 and extend the emergency declaration so we can continue to work together to get through this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Opsut
[REDACTED]

Jody Simpson

From: Arianne Bean [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2021 9:15 AM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: Support Alaska's emergency declaration to allow federal flexibilities to meet patient needs

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing today to urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits.

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Sincerely,

Arianne Bean

[REDACTED]

Jody Simpson

From: Mishelle Nace [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2021 9:22 AM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: Support Alaska's emergency declaration to allow federal flexibilities to meet patient needs

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing today to urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits.

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Sincerely,

Mishelle Nace
[REDACTED]

Jody Simpson

From: Melinda Balash [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2021 9:25 AM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: Support Alaska's emergency declaration to allow federal flexibilities to meet patient needs

Dear Senate Committee,

I am writing today to urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration. Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits.

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Sincerely,

Melinda Balash
[REDACTED]

Jody Simpson

From: Kerri Roe [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 09, 2021 6:45 AM
To: Senate Health and Social Services
Subject: The emergency declaration is critical to Alaska

Dear Senate Committee,

While the numbers of COVID cases in Alaska are currently (thankfully) trending down, Alaskans are only beginning to experience the financial, social, and emotional effects from the pandemic. We have already seen significant spikes in suicides, domestic violence, and child abuse cases. A disproportionate number of small businesses have been forced to close their doors. Some of our most reliable industries are now teetering on the edge of non-viability. Now is the time to really show our support for our fellow Alaskans, to demonstrate that we understand the strain this pandemic has placed on them not only medically, but emotionally and financially as well. As both a provider and a patient, continuing improved access to essential medical and behavioral health care for the next few months is critical to helping our Alaskan residents make a true and full recovery.

We need Alaska's public health disaster emergency declaration, and I urge your full and quick support for SB 56 to extend it. Please remember the health care workers who are taking care of Alaskans 24/7 during the COVID pandemic. They have made daily sacrifices to care for our community. The emergency declaration is necessary for this care to continue.

We continue to have dozens of Alaskans in hospitals and outbreaks in vulnerable populations. We face uncertainty over the impact of a new variant strain coming to Alaska. At the same time, we are mounting an intensive vaccine campaign.

Without an emergency declaration in place, we risk losing support from the national guard on testing and vaccine, flexibilities for COVID units in hospitals, and the ability to use telehealth and virtual medical visits. While we all want life to return to normal, eliminating the declaration will only slow us down. Please support SB 56.

Sincerely,

Kerri Roe
[REDACTED]



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ALASKA CHAPTER

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

February 8, 2021

Senator David Wilson
State Capitol Room 121
Juneau AK, 99801
Senator.David.Wilson@akleg.gov

RE: Alaska ACEP Supports Extending Disaster Declaration (SB 56)

Dear Senator Wilson,

The Alaska Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians is in strong support of SB 56 extending Alaska's public health emergency disaster declaration related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

After many hard months of caring for ill patients with Covid-19, we are heartened to see case counts and hospitalizations decreased for now, especially after the very challenging months of November and December. With vaccinations ramping up, there is a sense of hope that together we will bring the pandemic to a close. However, we remain vigilant in the ED as we know that it is not yet over, carefully donning and doffing PPE, protecting ourselves and our patients. The state needs to remain vigilant as well.

Though we are eager for the pandemic to be over, allowing the disaster declaration to end prematurely will only serve to lengthen the time we are forced to cope with Covid-19. The disaster declaration provides the state and its healthcare facilities with important flexibility and resources that will be needed to end the pandemic as quickly as possible. One example is around testing. With much of Alaska's population still vulnerable to Covid-19 infection and the specter of potential new variants of Covid-19, continued access to widespread testing is critical and the regulatory flexibility the disaster declaration affords allows alternative sites for screening/testing to operate. A big concern early in the pandemic was that ED's may be overwhelmed by well patients seeking Covid-19 testing for exposures or mild symptoms. Due to the alternative care sites this fortunately did not occur and enabled us to focus on the sickest patients.

Telehealth expansion is another crucial piece of the disaster declaration. The ability for patients to receive telehealth services, including from out of state providers, has allowed them to continue to access care while remaining in their communities, thus minimizing the risks associated with travel. If the disaster declaration is allowed to expire, patients may have this option removed, whether it be a visit with their cardiologist or behavioral health provider.

As vaccine production ramps up, we need to be able to continue to mobilize all resources to vaccinate our population as quickly as possible. Despite our state's geographic challenges, Alaska is still

among the top in the nation at vaccination rate. This in no small part is due to the flexibility the Alaska Disaster Act affords in allocating assets to assist in these efforts. Without a disaster declaration in place, this goes away, hindering the state's ability to bring Covid-19 under control.

SB 56 extending the disaster declaration is crucial in helping the state bring an end to the Covid-19 pandemic as quickly as possible. Alaska ACEP strongly supports it, and hopes the legislature acts quickly to pass it before it is due to expire on February 15th.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Papacostas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nicholas Papacostas MD, FACEP
President, Alaska ACEP