

Alaska State Legislature
REPRESENTATIVE BRYCE EDGMON
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

March 16, 2020

Governor Mike Dunleavy
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0001

Dear Governor Dunleavy,

The purpose of this letter is to request a meeting with you to discuss the growing public health crisis and the economic repercussions of the dramatic global slowdown that emerged last week.

The precipitous drop in oil prices and sharp downturn in the stock market creates an immediate double whammy for Alaska that significantly alters the state's revenue picture, both in the immediate future and likely in the longer term. This downturn comes at a time when the Constitutional Budget Reserve account has been nearly depleted, and there are no other savings accounts of significance to draw upon. Additionally, the economic repercussions of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 will impact Alaska's tourism, seafood, oil, and mining sectors, as well as virtually every other facet of our economy.

The State of Alaska is rightly focusing on protecting the health of Alaskans by preventing the spread of the new coronavirus. However, we must not lose sight of the tremendous negative economic impacts of the many necessary public health actions made at the local, state, and federal level. Individuals and businesses are suffering, and the effects will compound every day that our economy remains at a standstill. We ask that your administration work with the Legislature to consider any and all proposals, including:

- help businesses weather this unprecedented economic storm, possibly through state-backed bridge loans financed by state corporations;
- open or begin preparations to open temporary homeless shelters and quarantine sites;
- allow Department of Labor and Workforce to provide additional emergency assistance including no wait time for unemployment benefits and classifying quarantined individuals as unemployed;
- ensure that everyone who needs to be tested or treated for COVID-19 will not be forced to pay any out-of-pocket expense;
- restrict access to all state buildings to protect our state workers, and take measures to limit large gatherings statewide;

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- establish telework mandates for state employees;
- enact travel restrictions that will limit the number of people arriving in Alaska from COVID-19 hotspots;
- any other ideas that emerge to stimulate our struggling economy or protect the public health of Alaskans;
- need to protect rural Alaska because there is a lack of health facilities and ensure that adequate food supplies are available;

We do not endorse any of the above proposals at this time. However, we must elevate discussion of these and similar ideas immediately so that we quickly identify and use every tool at our disposal. We stand at the ready to assist in the policy work involved in these difficult and complicated decisions. Along this line, now is the time for these conversations between the Legislature and your administration to take place.

Your leadership to protect the health and safety of Alaskans from the debilitating effects of the coronavirus will continue to be essential. The question of reacting to the economic consequences remains open and must be addressed immediately.

We eagerly await your response and look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue with you and members of your administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bryce Edgmon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

House Speaker Bryce Edgmon

CC: Senate President Cathy Giessel
Senate Minority Leader Tom Begich
House Minority Leader Lance Pruitt