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December 14, 2020

Alaska COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Committee
c/o Anne Zink, Chief Medical Officer
3601 C Street, Suite 902
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Sent via email

Dear Alaska COVID-19 Vaccination Allocation Committee Members:

I am writing to ask the committee to consider Alaska Court System employees as essential workers for purposes of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Governor Dunleavy identified the court system as an essential service. In the *Alaska Essential Services and Critical Workforce Infrastructure Order* issued on March 27, 2020, the court system was listed under "public safety." In that order, Governor Dunleavy recognized that even in the event of a public health emergency, the courts were so imperative to public safety that they must continue to function in a relatively normal fashion. We took steps to protect our customers and employees by implementing social distancing requirements, face covering usage, and quarantine guidelines per the CDC and DHSS's recommendations. Unlike other state agencies, in order to continue to serve the public and administer justice, all but a few of our employees had to remain within our court buildings to perform their job duties. Many of our employees are actively engaged in courtrooms and assist customers at our counters. Even those who are not public facing must be in the buildings due to our dependence on thousands of physical case files, and ensuring continued operations of our forty courts statewide by our IT, fiscal operations, and human resource personnel.

Since March, we have done our best to try to meet our customer's needs and maintain the safety and welfare of our employees and the public. We have used technology resources to limit the number of people in court buildings, but some court proceedings cannot be done via remote access. Due to the rising COVID-19 cases and high alert levels statewide, we made the difficult decision to delay in-person grand jury proceedings until at least February 1, 2021, and suspend criminal jury trials until at least March 15, 2021.

On December 1, 2020, the presidents of the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA) wrote a letter to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urging him to include state court judges and employees as essential workers for purposes of COVID-19 vaccine distribution. I have attached that letter for your review. I am writing to put my full support behind the statements made in that letter.

It is our sincere request that Alaska Court System employees be considered as essential workers for purposes of vaccine distribution planning. Having priority in vaccine availability would play a vital role in allowing us to proceed with in-person proceedings which would give our customers greater access to justice across Alaska, and help to reduce the court case backlog.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Stacey Marz
Administrative Director