Office of Governor
MIKE DUNLEAVY

Governor Increases Novel Coronavirus Preparedness

March 2, 2020

Today, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy submitted a supplemental budget amendment to fund ten additional temporary positions within the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) for novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) preparedness and response. The supplemental budget would provide the Division of Public Health with five new public health nurses, three nurse epidemiologists, one microbiologist in Fairbanks to assist with lab testing, and one emergency manager to assist in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). These positions will be based statewide and will be able to travel as needed to rural communities to help monitor and screen for COVID-19.

"The coordination and constant contact between our State departments, and our local, tribal, and Federal partners has been commendable. We have been preparing for the past month-and-a-half and are now looking to bolster our preparedness and response teams by adding these ten new temporary positions," **said Governor Mike Dunleavy.** "Common sense protocols that would be applied to any flu or cold season will help Alaskans deal with potential illnesses we may see in the coming months."

"DHSS is grateful for Governor Dunleavy's involvement and attention to the COVID-19 response, and his support for this proactive approach. Throughout this response we have had continuous communication with other government agencies and key stakeholders including hospitals and medical providers," **said Adam Crum, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.** "To better protect the health of Alaskans from COVID-19, we have asked for these new resources and positions to fortify the DHSS EOC. This will allow public health nursing and epidemiology to have an increased presence around the state to help coordinate with local health care providers and many other partners statewide."

"While we have not yet seen any cases of COVID-19 in Alaska, our Emergency Operations Center has been in operation for over a month and we continue to work with Public Health, including testing for the disease," **said Dr. Anne Zink, Alaska Chief Medical Officer.** "It's important to remember that there are things we can to help protect ourselves, our families and our communities. Everyday measures, like those that prevent other respiratory illnesses like the flu and the common cold, also work to control the novel coronavirus."

The supplemental budget amendment would provide $4 million in state funds and allow for the receipt of $9 million in federal support for mitigation and response efforts.

For information on what Alaskans can do to prepare for COVID-19, click here.

Click here for the latest information on COVID-19.

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