

Dillingham City Council,

My name is Robert Cambron – I am the owner of the Dillingham Napa store. I became the owner just over a year ago in March, 2020, just as we headed into the global Covid crisis. While I am newer to the Dillingham community, I am not new to Alaska as I have spent the last 16 years with Alaska as my home and the place where I am raising my family. I also own the Napa store in another great western Alaska community – Bethel.

I would like to speak up regarding the proposed public ordinance to extend the existing Emergency Declaration thru September 3, 2021. Let me start with the acknowledgement that the City leadership has been working hard for the past year to do their best to keep the community safe. Their intentions and efforts have been great! However, it's important to also acknowledge that actions of any government should not be judged based on their *intentions*, but on their *results*. Additionally, review of results *must* include a realistic appraisal of what would have occurred *without* those actions.

It's time to ask the difficult question – do the real benefits of the continued emergency order and mandates really outweigh the “unintended consequences” I will highlight below. Deaths from heart disease, cancer, alcohol, drugs, suicide, etc. all far outnumber the deaths from Covid – and the focus on Covid has only further increased those deaths.

We are more than a year into this new reality with Covid and I want to highlight a few hard realities and facts regarding the *results* of the actions taken by cities across Alaska, including Dillingham:

- First – there is little to no statistical evidence distinguishing communities that went into harsh shutdowns, mandates, travel testing, quarantines, etc. and those communities that remained effectively open. At the end of this letter, I show a chart I put together from State data comparing the Bristol Bay Borough and the Dillingham Census Area.
 - o Both communities have a huge influx of “outsiders” flood their communities during the summer fishing season.
 - o Naknek / King Salmon had much less restrictive requirements during last years fishing season and has (as far as I can tell) let their Emergency Order expire in November, 2020.
 - o Both communities have never had much of a “curve” of cases, especially during the summer months. The statistical analysis is more of a straight line with lots of noise and a few outliers.
 - o Similar comparisons can be made for communities across Alaska, effectively showing that most mandates across the state have had very little to no effect on curbing the spread of the virus.
- Second – There is much data that shows an increased threat to Alaskans thru two very dangerous “unintended consequences” of many of these emergency orders and mandates.
 - o The first is a very apparent increase in the deaths from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and liver failure. When people are stuck inside, living in fear, and not going to the doctor because of the Covid pandemic – it results in a very real increase in the deaths from these diseases. See the table on Page 4 from the State showing a real increase in deaths from heart disease, cancers, liver disease, etc. How many of our friends and neighbors have died or will die of preventable diseases because they hesitated to go to the doctor early enough to identify a problem during the pandemic due to mandates or restrictions?
 - o The second danger is the real increase in mental health and depression issues that is growing across the state. Much of this can be tied to the reduction in human connections, living in fear, and economic fallout from many of our neighbors losing their jobs and their sense of worth in living. It is hard to statistically quantify this issue because many of the results from this mental health decline may take years to fully play out; however, I think we can all acknowledge the reality of the growing issue and indicators like the number of calls to mental health hotlines that show a significant increase.

- Third – the hyper focus on the dangers from Covid and its attempted remediation thru masking, testing, quarantine, etc have created much division, distrust and blaming in our communities. We should be coming together to help each other during our times of need. Instead, we are angry at those that don't do things "our" way and blaming others for the fear and mistrust that we are feeling (example – I've heard "If people like (fill in the blank) hadn't gone to Anchorage for the weekend we wouldn't have had these new positive cases".) Statement like this have no foundation in truth as it is impossible to tell how an airborne virus really spreads or who is "responsible" for it, but this sense of division is the exact opposite of what we should be fostering right now. It must be acknowledged that this division is a byproduct of the fear that is spread by the hyper focus from the government leaders on the virus. As leaders, you must be thoughtful of the unintended results of your actions and focus.
- Last – It is obvious around the state that cities that have taken a strict mandate approach have had disastrous results with their businesses and economic engines that keep the communities running. Honestly – Last year was a hard year for the Dillingham Napa Store as I know it was for many of the other businesses around our community. Sales were down substantially from previous years and as a new owner, it is difficult to cover those reductions in revenues. The summer is what keeps us afloat thru the winter just like so many other local businesses and last summer struggled to carry us thru this last winter in Dillingham. How many more summers like that can the local businesses take without folding – the lodges, tourism, fishing, etc. It affects all of us when these businesses fail.

In conclusion – please don't misunderstand me. Covid is a very real disease and can be very dangerous for a *small* portion of the population. Out of the 185 positive cases so far in Dillingham census area, data shows 5 hospitalizations (2.7%) and 1 death (.5%) and those rates are in decline. Data also now shows that the risk is highly dependent on age with the risk to those under 40 less than the flu or other common sicknesses. I have friends and family who have had the disease ranging from no symptoms up through those who have been hospitalized and really struggled with the disease. However, reality also tells us that Covid is here to stay – it's severity will lessen over the years (as every other disease does) and we will get better at treating it, but we will always have Covid among our communities.

To restate the question: do the real benefits of the continued emergency order and mandates really outweigh the "unintended consequences" I have highlighted above. All data shows the disease is in decline in western Alaska, across the state, and thru most of the country. Many Alaskan cities, the state, and many other states have let their disaster declarations expire and are getting back to real life.

We have a decision to make as a community. I say it is time to let the emergency order expire and focus on healing our communities, restoring the human connections, and rebuilding our families and businesses. Instead of spreading fear – lets spread the positive values of a life well lived – of investing in our friends and communities – and of embracing our neighbors whether in life or death. The vaccine is available for all those who want it and there have been very positive advances in the treatment of Covid for the small portion that may get serious symptoms. It's time to stop spreading further fear and division.

Thank you for letting me express my opinion – feel free to contact me directly to discuss any of the details I have discussed above. I enjoy getting into the sources and statistical analysis if anyone wants more information.

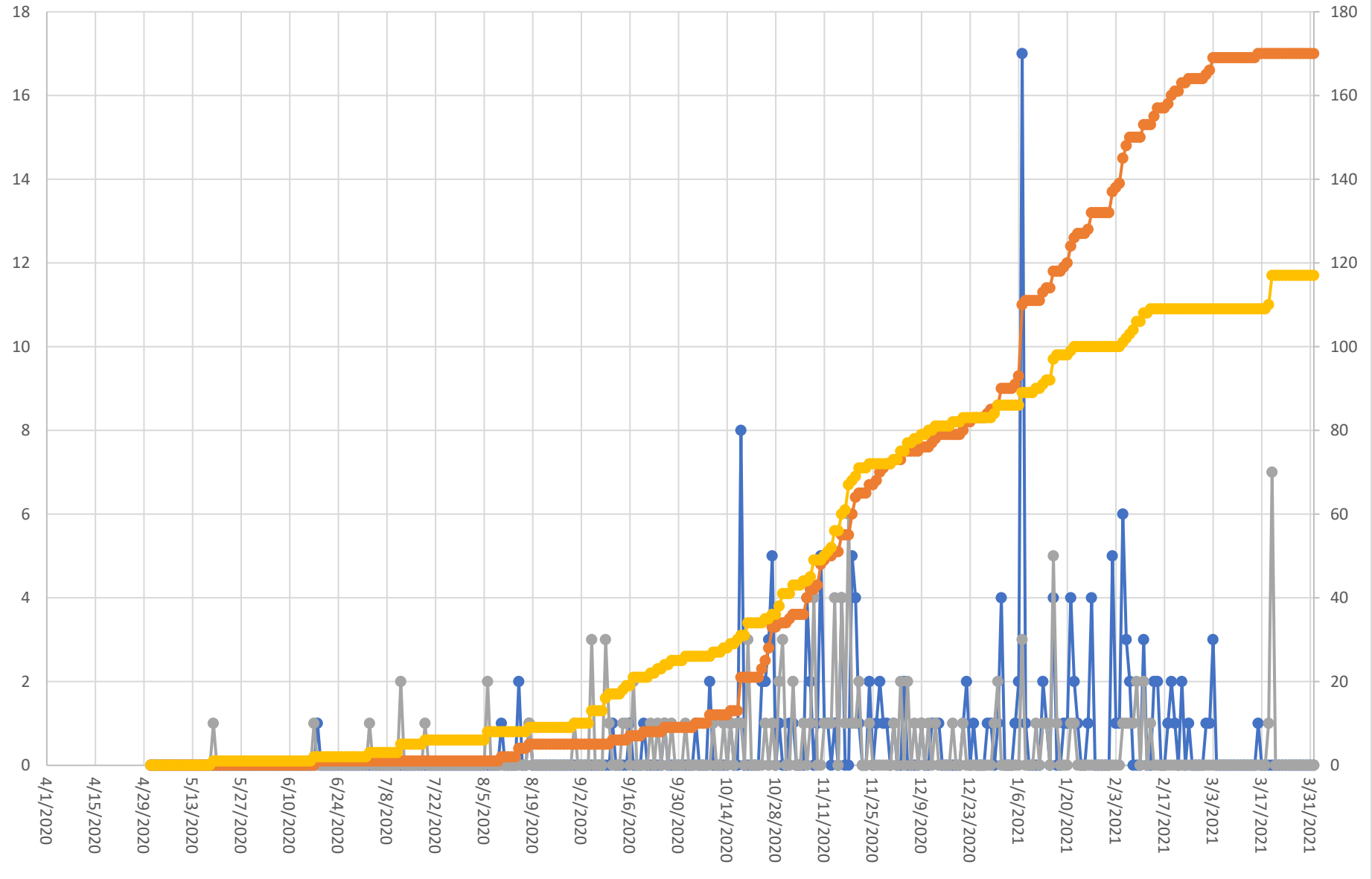
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SW Alaska Daily Cases & Total Cases

DLG Cases BBB Cases DLG Cumulative Total BBB Cumulative Total



Source: <https://alaska-coronavirus-vaccine-outreach-alaska-dhss.hub.arcgis.com/search?groupIds=41ccb3344ebc4bd682c74073eba21f42>

Table 1: Excess Deaths by Selected Cause, 2017-2019 compared to 2020, Alaska Residents

	ALL CAUSES	INFLUENZA AND PNEUMONIA	DISEASES OF THE HEART	MALIGNANT NEOPLASMS	CHRONIC LOWER RESPIRATORY DISEASES	INTENTIONAL SELF-HARM (SUICIDE)	ASSAULT (HOMICIDE)	MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS	ALL UNINTENTIONAL INJURIES (including Motor Vehicle Accidents)	CEREBROVASCULAR DISEASES (Stroke)	DIABETES	NEPHRITIS, NEPHROTIC SYNDROME AND NEPHROSIS (Kidney Disease)	CHRONIC LIVER DISEASE AND CIRRHOSIS
Counts	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec	Jan-Dec
2017	4,428	66	819	926	204	199	78	102	443	190	130	54	121
2018	4,461	70	816	957	221	187	56	95	399	213	123	46	121
2019	4,622	45	842	1,023	202	209	79	93	434	210	111	62	110
Avg. 2017-19	4,504	60	826	969	209	198	71	97	425	204	121	54	117
2020 ¹	5,033	50	861	1,007	201	193	48	77	400	204	164	60	159
Excess Deaths (2020-Avg)	529	-10	35	38	-8	-5	-23	-20	-25	0	43	6	42
Crude Rates per 100,000													
Rate 2017-2019 ²	613.34	8.22	112.45	131.92	28.46	27.01	9.67	13.16	57.93	27.83	16.52	7.35	15.98
Rate 2020 ¹	690.49	6.86	118.12	138.15	27.58	26.48	6.59	10.56	54.88	27.99	22.50	8.23	21.81
Excess Deaths (2020-Avg)	77.15	-1.36	5.68	6.23	-0.89	-0.53	-3.08	-2.60	-3.05	0.16	5.98	0.88	5.83

¹2020 estimates are preliminary and subject to change

²Used 2017-2019 average population for denominator for 2017-2019 average rate

*Crude rates based on fewer than 20 events are statistically unreliable and should be used with caution.

**Crude rates based on fewer than 6 events are not reported.

NOTE: Rates are not annualized and only reflect rates for the specified time period, therefore they cannot be compared with annual mortality rates. Statistical significance was not estimated between 2020 and 2017-2019 average estimates

Source: Alaska Division of Public Health, Vital Statistics, Mortality.

Last updated on 1/28/2020

ⁱ https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid19/excess_deaths.htm

ⁱⁱ <https://live.laborstats.alaska.gov/pop/>