



City Council
Nome, AK

5-13-21

Dear Members of the Nome City Council,

As the current Emergency Order requiring mandatory testing for unvaccinated individuals at the Nome Airport is soon coming to its expiration date, I wanted to give you an update on where things are at with our fight against Covid-19. I also wanted to give you our recommendation and reasoning for a short extension of that order, to get to the “finish line”.

First of all, NSHC wishes to thank the Mayor, the City Council and City Manager for the hard work and excellent collaboration we have experienced with you all over the past 15 months. Together, we have had success and made a difference in the lives of our region. Secondly, I would like to say that we are almost there, in our efforts to be able to fully open back up.

We are currently at a vaccination rate of 60% for the **entire region’s population** and 62% for the **entire Nome population**. Our goal has always been to get to a vaccination rate of 70-80% for the entire region, before opening back up. (the vaccination rates for the eligible populations over age 12 sit about 10% higher, but our goal of 70-80% is based on the **entire population**) We are still having scattered outbreaks in Nome, with multiple cases every week. Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Wasilla, and Palmer are having continued significant outbreaks, hospitalizations, and deaths, with many of these deaths in much younger age groups. We are certainly not over this pandemic yet, but we are getting closer.

There are two important requirements that NSHC feels we should achieve before dropping the very life-saving airport surveillance testing program that the Emergency Order provides:

1. There are approximately 1,000 children ages 2-11 in our region who have not yet been given the opportunity for vaccination. Many of them have asthma and other chronic lung diseases, which can make them vulnerable to more significant illness from Covid-19. This is the current age group in which we are seeing much of our recent outbreak. Although children do relatively well with Covid-19 infection, recent studies shown that over 78% of all childhood deaths from Covid-19 have happened in the minority populations of Alaska Natives/American Indian, Blacks and Hispanics. NSHC feels we have an ethical and moral responsibility to offer

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them the opportunity for a Pfizer vaccination before we “open things up”. Pfizer will be submitting data to the FDA on this age group in September, with approval expected in October. It will take NSHC only 1 week to get these children their 1st dose of vaccine, followed 3 weeks later by the second dose. By the end of October, we should have this group taken care of.

2. We would like to see our entire region’s population at a vaccination rate of 70-80% before opening up. This has ALWAYS been our goal. We wish we were there now, but vaccine hesitancy has slowed the process. We are currently gaining about 1% of the region weekly. At our current pace, we will be at the 70% level by the time we vaccinate the 2-11 yr age group.

Again, we feel extending the Emergency Order a few short months is an ethical responsibility. Extending it to October 31st will give those ages 2-11 the chance for protection and will get us to that 70% vaccination goal.

Respectfully,

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