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February 1, 2021

Commissioner Crum,

I am writing today on behalf of the nearly 1900 working men and women across Alaska who comprise the membership of the Public Employees Local 71 Union regarding COVID-19 Vaccinations in the interest of public safety.

It is an honor to represent these members whose essential services contribute in so many meaningful ways to our combined public service, and directly support the many services we all rely upon day in and day out. Our members have remained on the frontlines throughout this pandemic response, maintaining the transportation corridors used for commerce and emergency responders, state and municipal facilities, schools, and institutions. We all rely on the oft-unrecognized work they provide, and this burdensome year has highlighted for Alaskans what their Union has known all along; that these workers are "essential."

These men and women have not simply performed their daily duties throughout the hardship of the last eleven months, they have excelled. And, they have received numerous recognitions for doing so. The Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport was even recognized by FedEx and others as being the "Cleanest in the Nation." (*see DOT press release March 5, 2020*)

Our frontline work requires that we show up. Our roads and airports require the highest level of care to keep Alaska moving. Our facilities, schools, and other facilities continue to need to be kept to the highest standards, and they don't get sanitized from home. Telework, which has been a vital component of the pandemic response for so many, is not an option for the workers placed at risk every day providing the essential services represented by Local 71. Across Alaska, we are all relying on these workers to make our other essential services possible.

While obtaining a vaccination should remain an individual decision, our essential workers who want to do so should be afforded this option. While some of our members already fit neatly into the categories described for current eligibility, we urge you to incorporate our job classes for vaccination eligibility now in the interest of public safety. Our members working in our prisons, elder care facilities, and schools are breathing the same air as those already approved for vaccination within the published schedule. Our localized teams of transportation workers are already operating at minimum capacity due to budget cuts, and it must be recognized that all other services cannot afford the results of allowing them to become incapacitated. Any delay in these services affects all other services upon which Alaskans rely, many of which are constitutionally mandated. Let's work together to ensure consistent public service and maintain readiness.

In the interest of public safety, we urge you to amend the current vaccine schedule to recognize the necessity of the work provided by the working men and women of Public Employees Local 71. Alaskans deserve as much, and so do our members.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Adams".

Jordan A. Adams
Local 71 Business Manager, Secretary / Treasurer
Chair, Local 71 Health Trust