



# Coastal Villages Region Fund

711 H Street, Suite 200 • Anchorage, Alaska 99501 • Phone 907.278.5151 • Fax 907.278-5150

December 7, 2020

Via Email

Dear State of Alaska Vaccine Allocation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the State's COVID-19 vaccination allocation and distribution plans. All Alaskans are grateful for your and for your efforts to promote our safety and welfare during the pandemic. Coastal Villages Region Fund (CVRF) is a non-profit organization. We are the largest of the six Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) program groups which are empowered through federal law to provide a wide range of benefits to residents of western Alaska. Our benefits programs are supported by earnings from fishing operations in the Bering Sea. CVRF represents 20 Yukon-Kuskokwim villages: Chefnak, Chevak, Eek, Goodnews Bay, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, Mekoryuk, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nightmute, Oscarville, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tuntutuliak, and Tununak.

CVRF would like to offer our hand in partnership with the State of Alaska, Vaccine Taskforce, and the Allocation Committee. In recent weeks, our team has joined the Vaccine ECHO weekly calls and multiple sub-groups to learn about the upcoming vaccine distribution. Since CVRF's communities are among the most remote, poorest, and infrastructure-challenged in the country, we believe the Committee would benefit from specific knowledge about the public health challenges in our region.

The CVRF region is in the epicenter of the rural Alaska housing crisis, with many of our people living in 3- and even 4-generation overcrowded housing units. These conditions are ripe for the spread of virus, especially amongst our elders. There are no long-term care facilities in our region; our elders live with their families by tradition and because there is no other option.

Many of our people lack running water and sewer. Normal hygiene practices such as frequent handwashing are often not practicable. Compounding this risk, only two of our twenty communities have sub-regional health clinics. When viral outbreaks occur, they spread quickly because there is often no capacity or ability to care for the sick or remove them from the homes they share with many other family members. We strongly encourage the Committee to take these situations into account when considering vaccination schedules for communities and those most at-risk.

We applaud the Committee's decision to prioritize healthcare workers and first responders. Unfortunately, many of our communities have insufficient numbers of formally trained first responders and essential healthcare workers. However, we have residents who perform these roles anyway, out of necessity. We believe the Committee should recognize this reality of life in rural Alaska and not relegate communities which lack the resources to hire first responders. It makes good sense to prioritize first responders within their communities. It makes no sense to delay vaccinating communities already at great risk because they can't afford to hire formally trained health aides or a police force.



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Rural Alaska is unique. Well-intentioned government policies often don't fit well in our region. We urge you to ensure that our state's vaccination plan recognizes and responds to the unique challenges we face. Our indigenous populations have been ravaged by sickness brought from outside before. With proper prioritization, equity, and understanding of how our communities work, the mistakes of the past can be avoided.

Once more, thank you for your continued work on a complex and difficult path. We offer ourselves as partners through this process and look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Deakin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E".

Eric Deakin,  
CEO