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Commissioner

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**Department of Health
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STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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Report shows Alaska has had fewer COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths compared with peer states

October 19, 2020 ANCHORAGE — A recent study by Evergreen Economics comparing COVID-19 cases, hospitalization, and deaths between seven geographically large and predominantly rural states found that Alaska has fared better so far during the COVID-19 pandemic than our peer states.

The report points out that the percentage of people who tested positive for COVID-19 and required hospitalization was lower in Alaska (3.55%) than in any of the six other peer states and substantially lower than the national average, as of Oct. 8, 2020. Likewise, the percentage of persons who tested positive for COVID-19 and died was lower for Alaska (0.67%) than any of the peer states or the U.S. with a lower percentage of the overall population that tested positive for COVID-19.

The data illustrate the power of prevention, highlighting the efforts of everyday Alaskans as well as the public health and health care response. Although seven additional deaths have been added to Alaska's database since the report was compiled, the report's overall conclusions remain valid.

"This report illustrates the outcome of the selfless efforts that were made to protect public health – efforts made by all Alaskans," said Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy. "While the pandemic is not yet behind us, we have a strong sense of optimism looking forward and will continue to monitor and respond to this evolving situation with the health and wellbeing of Alaskans at the forefront of our decision making."

"Prevention efforts have made a big difference in Alaska," added Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Adam Crum. "This report highlights our successes but also underscores the need for all of us to remain vigilant. How we continue to respond over the next several weeks to months will determine how well we ultimately fare in this pandemic. Our goal is to keep Alaska's hospitalization and mortality rates as low as possible, but we need everyone's help and renewed commitment from Alaskans to ensure that happens."

Alaska's vast open spaces and geographic isolation coupled with its generally young and small population are contributing factors in this success story. However, by comparing Alaska with peer

states, we can understand how the prevention actions of everyday Alaskans, along with widespread testing, contact tracing, and a focus on protecting vulnerable populations, have helped prevent cases, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Alaska was also fortunate to stave off high numbers of cases early in the pandemic, which likely is another contributing factor in Alaska's lower rates.

According to the report, hospitalizations would be three times greater under the peer-state scenario (320 versus 964) and more than four times greater under the U.S. scenario (320 versus 1,308). Under the peer-state scenario, more than 200 Alaska residents who were COVID-positive would have died (compared to 60 who had actually died as of Oct. 8) and under the average U.S. scenario, nearly 500 would have died.

"Prevention works and saves lives," said Alaska's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink. "With most regions in Alaska now at the high alert level, or red zone, for the 14-day daily case average, we all must step up our prevention efforts. Let's protect vulnerable groups and continue to keep our hospitalizations and deaths low."

All Alaskans should continue practicing these important prevention measures.

- Keep close interactions to a very small group of people, ideally just within your household.
- Stay 6 feet away from others.
- Mask up in public places.
- Avoid gatherings. Find creative ways to be social that keep people six feet apart. Being outdoors around others is safer than being indoors.
- Wash hands often. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces and objects.
- Stay home if you feel sick.
- Get tested for COVID-19 even if you have one symptom, or mild symptoms.
- Keep track of your contacts and contact them immediately if you test positive for COVID.
- Answer the call if a public health contact tracer calls you and follow their guidelines.

Please find the Evergreen report attached.

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