April 7, 2020

Dear Bethel Retailers:

We write to you as the regional leadership of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to thank you for providing essential retail services to Bethel and surrounding communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We support the recommendations issued by the CDC, as well as the mandates and advisories issued by the State of Alaska. Today we write to offer a recommendation that we hope you will seriously consider implementing as soon as possible in an effort to help protect residents of our hub community.

Specifically we ask that you immediately require ALL customers to wear face masks or cloth face coverings.

COVID-19 has reached the YK-Delta, which means community spread is possible. Both the CDC and the State of Alaska recommend the wearing of cloth face coverings in public settings when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (like in grocery stores or other similar public settings). Retail stores in Bethel are high traffic areas, and this additional safety measure could help slow the spread of the virus and protect residents and employees. As you know, our healthcare system is vulnerable if we experience a large surge of infected patients, our transportation system is vulnerable, and our ability to meet basic needs for survival is vulnerable. Requiring customers to wear face masks or cloth face coverings, in addition to following all of the other health guidelines, could help to save lives.

Please take action now.
Sincerely,

Vivian Korthuis, Chief Executive Officer
Association of Village Council Presidents

Michael Hoffman, Executive Director
Yuut Elitnaurviat

Ana Hoffman
Bethel Native Corporation

Dan Winkelman, President & CEO
Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation

Dan Walker, Superintendent
Lower Kuskokwim School District

Mark Charlie, President & CEO
AVCP Regional Housing Authority