



June 7, 2020

Dear Economic Stabilization Task Force,

Airlift Northwest has been serving the communities of Southeast Alaska for over 37 years, including establishing a base in Juneau over 25 years ago. We began after a tragic house fire in Sitka claimed the lives of three children. Dr. Michael Copass, then Director of Emergency Services at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, created the region's first Southeast Alaska air medical transport service in 1982. Since our founding, we have flown over 120,000 patients.

We appreciate your consideration of including Airlift Northwest in your recommendation for allocation of CARES Act funds. As UW Medicine's medevac provider, we function like a not-for-profit, and are ineligible for the majority of the relief programs that are available to for-profit companies and traditional non-profits. While this structure allows us to provide patients a higher level of care when they need it the most, it falls through the cracks for receiving support during this difficult time. Airlift Northwest is an organization that has prioritized patient care over profits, offering Southeast Alaskan's a two nurse model of care, blood products, a pediatric specialty team, and a PC 12 turboprop. This aircraft can transport bariatric patients, two patients at a time and land on smaller runways. We would like to continue to offer these medevac services to the region, which is why we have turned to the municipalities and tribes to ask for help.

Airlift Northwest is experiencing unprecedented financial challenges related to COVID-19. Our flight volume was down 66% for April 2020 compared to April 2019 and our operating revenue was down 74.59% for April 2020. Between social distancing, hunker down directives and people avoiding the hospital out of fear of COVID-19 exposure, ER usage is down significantly around the country. In addition, elective surgeries have been postponed. This has resulted in a significant decrease in demand for medevac services.

With the loss of the tourism sector for the 2020 season, the decline in flight volume and revenue will be even more significant. In order to mitigate the loss of flights and revenue, Airlift is planning to relocate the PC 12 turboprop to Washington State. Unfortunately this negatively impacts the smaller communities that cannot be accessed by jet and limits their medevac options. In addition, Airlift Northwest often uses the PC 12 turboprop to bring patients from the smaller communities to Juneau to receive care at Bartlett Regional Hospital.

With grant funding Airlift Northwest will be able to mitigate the expense of keeping the PC 12 turboprop in Alaska. In the event of a COVID-19 outbreak this allows us to access the communities not accessible by jet so we can transport suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients using the ISO-POD (specialized patient isolation transport pod). By using the ISO-POD,

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we add another layer of protection for our nurses, pilots and our partners in the communities we provide services to.

Our goal is to continue to provide critical care medevac services and education to pre-hospital and hospital providers in Southeast Alaska. With \$2.5 million in grant funding Airlift Northwest will commit to keeping the PC 12 turboprop in Alaska through the end of 2020. This will keep four pilot positions in Juneau and four nursing positions to staff the PC 12. All eight of these positions are high paying jobs that positively impact the Juneau community. Additionally, it will give Hoonah, Skagway, Kake, Haines, Klawock, and Craig increased access to medevac services.

Airlift Northwest has received a verbal pledge of \$1 million dollars from another CARES Act recipient and is asking communities and tribes throughout Southeast to come together and each make a contribution to keep Airlift's PC 12 turboprop servicing the region. In addition to keeping the PC 12 aircraft in Alaska, Airlift Northwest will continue to look for ways to support the communities in Southeast. We can provide education, as well as, share protocols, policies and insights in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

We greatly appreciate any financial contribution the city of Juneau can allocate to support Airlift Northwest keeping the PC 12 turboprop in Alaska. I have enclosed a list of benefits to keeping this aircraft in Southeast Alaska and providing services to Juneau and the surrounding communities. I also included a list of other ways our organization is mitigating expenses during this difficult time. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Shelly Deering  
Regional Manager

Kara Hollatz  
Outreach Coordinator

Enclosures



### **Benefits to funding and keeping Airlift NW in Alaska:**

- Airlift has partnered with Juneau's Fire Department, CCFR, to be able to offer the ISO-POD (a transport isolation pod) to the communities in Southeast Alaska. This technology adds an additional layer of protection for preventing the spread of the virus during transport.
- If there is a surge in COVID-19 cases, Alaskan's will benefit from having multiple medevac services.
- If clinics or hospitals are having a difficult time getting a patient accepted into Harborview Medical Center, Airlift Northwest can help to facilitate acceptance as we are a part of the University of Washington Medical System.
- As an extension of University of Washington Medical System, Airlift NW is able to bring a flying ICU to patients two to three hours before they arrive at a larger hospital.
- Airlift has the ability to initiate, continue or expand the delivery of antibiotic therapy. These medications include: ceftriaxone, cephazolin, clindamycin, vancomycin and Zosyn. This allows the capability to provide broad spectrum coverage. Early administration of antibiotics saves lives.
- Airlift is the only medevac provider in Alaska that offers two units of packed red blood cells (PRBCs) and two units of liquid plasma. This allows us to provide lifesaving care, without depleting a communities own blood supply. Research has proven that administering these products en-route can help increase patient survival by 10%.
- Airlift is also the only medevac provider in Alaska that utilizes the two nurse model of care. Our flight crew is made up of two highly trained critical care nurses, which allows us to maintain or expand on the care they are already receiving during transport. Airlift NW also employs pediatric critical care nurses.
- UW Medicine is the teaching institution for the WAMI region. Doctors in our fellowship program do rotations in rural Alaska. Airlift NW also does ride-alongs for medical and nursing students. Our medical directors also fly with the Juneau team.
- As part of our mission to share expertise our medical directors and nursing staff have provided free education throughout Southeast Alaska for many years. This encompasses EMS and hospital practice. They have given talks for credits on a variety of pertinent issues including the following:
  - Participant in Southeast Regional EMS Symposium
  - Approach to the Crashing Neonate
  - Tips and Tricks for Pediatric Resuscitation
  - Adult Complaints in the Pediatric Patient
  - Trauma Cases and Chest Trauma Skills
  - Uncommon Trauma Cases and Considerations for Initial Management
  - Pills, Poisons, and Smoke: Practical Toxicology for the Provider



**What Airlift Northwest and UW Medicine are doing to mitigate expenses:**

- Currently Airlift has three aircraft to service Alaska: two Lear jet 31A's and one PC 12 turboprop. In order to mitigate the loss of flights and revenue, Airlift is planning to relocate our PC 12 to Washington State.
- Reduction of compensation for senior leadership.
- System-wide expense reductions that support more "lean" operations.
- Postponement of non-mission critical expenses.
- Limiting new recruitments to positions of critical importance and postponement of non-mission critical expenses.
- Professional staff and classified non-union team members throughout the UW Medicine, including Airlift Northwest are being furloughed. Our nursing staff have volunteered furlough time to assist in mitigation of expenses.

*Airlift Northwest is a Washington state tax exempt entity of University of Washington Medicine that functions like a not-for-profit.*