



## The Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Monday, April 6, 2020

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi  
FROM: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19  
RE: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 Report

Dear Senate President,

Please see the attached report prepared following the April 3, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Office of the Governor
- Department of Human Resources Development
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Education

Sincerely,

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani

Senator Donna Mercado Kim  
Senator Sharon Moriwaki  
Senator Kurt Fevella

Attachment

Cc: All Senators

### **Office of the Governor**

Ms. Linda Chu Takayama, Chief of Staff, provided the Committee the following update in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Federal Updates**

- Hawaii was granted Title 21 status, which provides federal funding for activation of the National Guard for COVID-19 mitigation, including support screening at airports.
  - This status was granted for only 30 days, but Hawaii hopes to gain an extension like other states have been given.
- Governor is preparing for new federal funding granted through the CARES Act, but official federal guidance has not yet been finalized.
  - Hawaii will receive over \$4 billion for the expansion of established programs, such as unemployment, childcare, and educational programs. State hopes this will alleviate the need for general funds to cover critical services.
  - Hawaii will receive an additional \$1.25 billion that will be shared between the State and Honolulu County, which qualifies for a portion of the funding because it has over 500 thousand residents.
  - State will determine the allocation to Honolulu, so the remainder of the State receives a fair amount.
- Governor has asked the President to allow additional leasing space for the detention center.

### **State Updates**

- Over 107,000 new claims have been submitted for unemployment insurance.
- Dept. of Agriculture is working to find new markets for farm produce and to continue shipment of cattle to the mainland.
- State's incident command has been working with nongovernmental groups that are offering private support to the community.
  - If new organizations and businesses would like to offer social services, contact the State's incident command by email [covidkokua@hawaii.gov](mailto:covidkokua@hawaii.gov).
  - Governor asked Aloha United Way to reactivate social service groups through 211 to connect those in need of social assistance and information.
- If Legislators have concerns, questions and ideas, send comments to the Governor's Legislative Policy Director, Kym Sparlin at 586-0794 or [Kymberly.m.sparlin@hawaii.gov](mailto:Kymberly.m.sparlin@hawaii.gov)

### **Airport Policies**

- To prevent arrivals of homeless individuals, the Governor directed airport officials to verify that arriving passengers have a residence or hotel for quarantining.
  - If the passenger does not, then they will be told to turn around and leave the State immediately.
  - If a person cannot afford a departing flight, the State will tap into HTA funds to pay for a return trip.

- Hawaii mayors have spoken with the White House about stopping all non-essential travel to Hawaii.
- President stated he would consider a request to stop travel only if Governor Ige agreed to the policy.
  - Governor Ige is reviewing if stopping non-essential travel would have unintended consequences. After analysis, the Governor will issue an opinion.
- Governor discussed closing down some Hawaii airports with the FAA because of the operational cost with limited travelers.
  - FAA refused to allow the State to close airports and threatened to revoke their grants for repair and maintenance of airports.

### **Redeployment of Non-essential State Workers**

- Governor is supportive of redeployment of non-essential state workers to hard-hit departments, such as DLIR's Unemployment Division, but wants to make sure the policies will align with current law and unions.
- If the Attorney General determines provisions outside of Chapter 89 need to be waived, then the Governor will consider a new executive order.

### **Release of Inmates**

- Governor has little input on the decision to release 400+ inmates; Chief Justice has the authority to make the decision.
- As of now, there is no intention to release additional inmates.
- Takayama agreed to ask the Governor to speak with the Chief Justice and make his position known on whether or not he agrees publicly on releasing the 400+ inmates.

### **Cancelling RIMPAC**

- Ms. Takayama agreed to speak with the Governor about requesting the military cancel RIMPAC meetings.

### **Department of Human Resources Development**

Mr. Ryker Wada, Director, provided the Committee the following update.

### **Redeployment of State Workers**

- Committee notes that in the Governor's Proclamation on March 3, 2020, he stated that he could suspend Chapter 89 and redeploy human resources to meet the State's needs.
  - Director Wada confirmed that Chapter 89 has yet to be suspended.
- Committee has concerns that this has yet to occur and inquires about the Governor's plans to manage this moving forward.
- HRD contacted all labor unions following the March 3<sup>rd</sup> proclamation.
  - They have not been in contact with the unions regarding the suspension of Chapter 89 since that initial correspondence.

- Wada informed the Committee that a memo went out to all departments, with a follow up requiring a response by mid-day Monday, April 6.
  - To this date they have received responses from:
    - Department of Labor and Industrial Relations,
    - Department of Land and Natural Resources,
    - Small Business Administration; and
    - Department of Agriculture.
- HRD has sent requests to other departments asking for voluntary redeployments to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.
- Wada also informed the Committee that the Department of Labor and Industrial relations is also redeploying staff internally.
- Committee inquired about any further correspondence with the departments on additional staff or resources they may need.
- Committee asked Wada if those working are working a full 8 hours, and if not, could some jobs be combined and redeploy those whose duties were reassigned to another.

#### **Essential Workers**

- HRD continues its work on classifying workers.
  - A list will be completed by April 7.
- Committee noted two workers included in the Department's provided Request for Information that were listed as both "non-essential" and "non-telework."
  - Wada responded that both are 89-day hires, and not currently being paid.

#### **Worker Furloughs**

- Wada informed the Committee that 89-day hires are not eligible to be paid at this time.
- Committee inquired about the total number of 89-day hires in Departments.
  - Wada indicated that he would get information back to the Committee.

#### **Department of Agriculture**

Ms. Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, Chairperson, provided the Committee the following update.

#### **Federal Emergency Assistance for Food Needs**

- DOA has identified USDA programs that can provide emergency food assistance for commodities (\$1.5M), TFAP (\$662K), and SNAP (\$2.1M) all through USDA programs.
- Additional assistance of \$9.1M is available for providers of specialty crops and for other producers that supply our food distribution system, such as livestock producers.
- USDA will be providing details.
  - USDA website: [www.usda.gov/coronavirus](http://www.usda.gov/coronavirus).
- The federal assistance monies will likely be distributed by USDA.
- DOA is referring people to SBA for payroll assistance.

### **Agricultural Loans**

- Agriculture loan payments can be deferred under the Governor's emergency proclamation.
- DOA is also asking the Board of Agriculture to activate emergency loans for COVID 19 needs.
- DOA's loan division can work with existing borrowers on work-out agreements.
  - Board Chair can modify existing loans.
  - As to deferment of tax payments, the Department defers to the Department of Taxation, but believe they have postponed 2019 state income tax payments to July 20.

### **CIP Projects**

- Governor has expedited the release of grants-in-aid monies for construction and agriculture-related projects.
- DOA has given the Governor a list of projects that are ready to go within the next 6 to 12 months.
- Department of Budget and Finance will expedite the approval process of capital improvement project requests.

### **Critical Food and Security Infrastructure**

- DOA has identified that food transportation and cold storage facilities are current weaknesses.
  - DOA is reaching out to organizations that may have excess cold storage capacity at this time.
- Maintenance of irrigation systems are vulnerable because infectious diseases could be spread to all members of the team and temporarily remove critical maintenance workers from the workforce.
- Hog industry is also vulnerable because food waste, usually used for feed, has become scarce due to the shutdown of restaurants and schools.
- Reliance on the tourism hospitality industry does have a direct impact on our agriculture industry.
  - Farmers have lost 50 to 60 percent of their market in the first week of the stay in place measures.
- DOA's understanding is that HIEMA does not have agreements with food distributors but did work with procurement for a Request for Information several years ago from the food industry.
  - Unfortunately, the State Procurement Officer did not receive many responses, and HIEMA did sign with the Salvation Army with regards to mass feeding and distributions.
- For food reserves, DOA defers to HIEMA.
- Department of Human Services is the lead on planning for the storage of food reserves for disasters.

- HIEMA and the Department of Defense are being supported with logistics management and resource management by the Department of Accounting and General Services.
- As to whether residents can obtain enough food and water for a 14-day period, DOA defers to HIEMA.

### **Farmers Markets**

- Hawaii Farm Bureau should get credit for implementing a drive-thru concept.
  - When the farmers markets closed, farmers had already harvested and packed for that market.
  - DOA worked with the Public Safety Department to purchase some of the products including frozen Ulu and off-grade avocados.
    - Farmers didn't get the full price but got some revenue at an agreed price with state institutions.
- DOA is also working to open additional farmers market while addressing social distancing concerns.
- Hawaii Farm Bureau is also looking at drive-through farmers markets outside of urban Honolulu.

### **Department of Education**

Dr. Christina Kishimoto, Superintendent, provided the Committee the following update.

#### **High School Graduation**

- Board of Education approved a waiver of high school graduation requirements.
- DOE will be releasing details about the requirements and guidance for students & parents on Monday, April 6.
  - Approximately 10 percent of high school students are not on track to graduate.
  - Those students who are able to do so will be allowed to do extra work to make up for any credit deficits they have – the guidance will provide requirement details.
- All high school students need to be able to utilize distance learning if they are going to be able to graduate.
  - DOE is working to ensure that all HS students have access to distance learning devices and the internet.
- DOE is reviewing options to provide appropriate and safe graduation ceremonies for graduating seniors, but the pandemic is unlikely to allow traditional graduation ceremonies to occur.

#### **Distance Learning**

- DOE and HSTA have signed a letter of agreement outlining their partnership to provide distance learning for Hawaii students.

- Distance learning will likely be required beyond April 30, and the DOE is working on models and plans to continue effective distance learning.
  - DOE has been in contact with other states regarding their distance learning programs.
  - DOE is also providing information to students and parents about additional distance learning resources and programs beyond what the DOE is providing to all students.
- Homeless students face critical needs to be able to distance learning, and DOE's homeless student liaisons are working to ensure those needs are met.
- Special Education students also face unique challenges, and the DOE is working to fulfill those needs.
- Students or parents who have questions or concerns are urged to call their school's main number or the DOE main number.
  - These numbers are being monitored, and voicemails will be returned.

#### **School Meals Program**

- The program started with 50 school sites and has been adding 5-7 additional sites per week.
- The location of the sites is driven by Title 1 requirements.
- Maintaining supplies of masks and disposable trays are a challenge.
  - DOE is working to locate additional supplies.
  - DOE is planning meal options in the event additional disposable trays cannot be located.
- Food donations are not permitted under federal regulations, nor are volunteer vendors permitted to distribute meals at the same time and in the same location as the DOE.
  - Volunteer donations and vendors are being provided guidance and referred to other groups who can help coordinate those activities.
- Under federal regulations, the DOE is generally not allowed to distribute food to adults.
- Meals are being provided to children/students.
- In a few special circumstances related to child safety, the DOE can distribute meals to an adult on behalf of a child.
  - Permitted circumstances mainly relate to disabled students, those in protective custody, and homeless students.

-end of report-