



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Wednesday, April 15, 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 13, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Office of the Governor
- Office of Enterprise Technology
- Department of Taxation
- Department of Human Resources Development

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.

Testing and Flattening the Curve

- 504 confirmed positive COVID-19 tests to date.
 - State has completed 19,213 tests.
 - Testing is done only for those who are most likely positive, i.e., symptomatic.
- State has received the Abbot Rapid tests.
 - One Abbot test produces four test results per hour.
 - Supplies are limited.
 - State received 100 Abbot test kits.
 - Each test kit produces five tests in total.
 - The federal government is controlling the sale and distribution of these rapid test machines.
- The expectation is that the virus will be present for some unknown time, likely until there is a vaccine or adequate testing.

Visitor Air Travel and Visitor Restrictions

- Visitor air flight restrictions have resulted in less than 100 arrivals per day.
 - Pre-COVID, it was higher than 30,000 per day.
- Visitors are subject to a 14-day self-quarantine.
 - This is being tracked by web-app.
 - Visitors who arrive without accommodations are being given the option to take a return flight or to go to jail.
 - Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) is providing funds for any that do not have the financial ability to purchase a return flight.
 - The Committee asked how the State is verifying visitors comply with the restrictions.
 - HTA is checking on visitors in hotels daily via phone.
 - Ms. Takayama indicated that she would ask the Authority to provide stats.
 - Visitors staying in private residences or long-term rentals are not being checked on, according to Ms. Takayama.
 - Visitors are allowed to stay less than 14 days and then return home.
 - Ms. Takayama will check on the possibility of a policy of preventing passengers from disembarking aircraft similar to that being used with cruise ships.
 - Ms. Takayama will check on the possibility of a policy barring visitors from renting automobiles.
- The Governor has been in contact with the FAA regarding reducing the number of passengers to Hawaii.
 - FAA is going to continue to enforce the non-discrimination regulations and not limit travel to Hawaii.
 - FAA will not require pre-flight testing for COVID-19.

- The Committee clarified that they are not asking the Governor to close the airports, but requests once again that he join the county mayors in writing a letter to President Trump asking that he temporarily stop all non-essential travel from flying into the State of Hawaii.
 - The Committee followed up on the request, adding that if the Governor continues to choose not to send a letter to the president, that he at least make a statement to the public explaining his rationale in not doing so.
- Ms. Takayama indicated that she would take the questions and requests back to the Governor.

Resident Restrictions

- The State is asking residents to continue social distancing, to use masks, and to stay at home.
 - Restrictions may be limited on a national basis by region.
 - Per the White House, the various restrictions may be lifted by region of the country.
 - Hot spots will keep restrictions; other areas may begin to loosen those restrictions.
 - The Governor plans to wait until closer to April 30 before making any decisions about Hawaii's restrictions.
 - Tighter restrictions have kept our numbers low.
 - General Hara and others have expressed concern about loosening those restrictions.
 - The expectation is that virus will be present until a vaccine or other measures are perfected.
- The Governor has created an economic recovery committee to address the State's long-term economic recovery.
 - The expectation is that representatives from all of Hawaii's economic sectors will be part of the Committee.
 - Public health will also be represented.
 - The Hawaii House and Senate will have seats at the table.

RIMPAC

- The Governor has been in contact with INDO-PACOM, which governs the RIMPAC exercises.
- The Governor recognizes the importance of military training and the impact of the military on Hawaii's economy.
- The Governor is considering methods to keep the ships from docking, to restrict the sailors to their ships, and keep them from coming onto Hawaii soil.

Federal CARES Act Funding

- The Committee asked for the Administration's plan for maximizing the federal funds provided through the CARES Act.
 - Ms. Takayama indicated that there is no written plan or organizational chart for dealing with this issue.

- Parts of this structure are in "various" documents.
- The federal government is to release additional details on the funding on 4/14/2020.
- Ms. Takayama stated that Ms. Rona Suzuki, Director of the Department of Taxation (DoTAX), will be the lead on telling the departments what funds are available, and what deadlines they face.
 - Ms. Suzuki will remain the head of DoTax during this process.
- Ms. Takayama also indicated that she is ultimately responsible if anything "falls through the cracks."
- The entire cabinet will be involved in this process.
 - The federal funds will be coming through existing financial pipelines.
 - Funding will have to be applied for by the relevant Department.
 - Each Department is responsible for maximizing the federal funds available and for tracking any related spending.
- The Committee suggested that a written plan and a funding matrix be created.
 - The Committee also suggested that this information be posted, so the public has access.

Redeployment of State Employees

- The redeployment of state employees (those who are non-essential, non-telework capable) began today.
 - Eighteen employees were tasked with the Unemployment Issuance (UI) Division of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.
 - More is needed, but the UI Department needs additional facilities and equipment to accommodate extra staff help.
- The Committee asked if the Governor's office had a list of employees who could be redeployed.
 - Ms. Takayama responded that the Governor's office does not have such a list, but that the Department of Human Resources Development should.
 - Ms. Takayama stated that it is the directors' responsibility to keep such lists.
 - Ms. Takayama stated that there are only two weeks left in the Governor's proclamation, but that the State would do its best to redeploy all available workers.
- The Committee asked why it took so long to develop a list of employees to redeploy.
 - The Committee also requested a daily report on the redeployment of state employees.
- The Committee inquired on whether the Administration's lack of timeliness in executing the redeployment of workers may result in worker furloughs.
 - Ms. Takayama stated that she could not comment on any future plans regarding the furlough of state employees.

Pandemic Emergency Command Structure

- The Committee asked for a definition of Ms. Takayama's pandemic command structure position and role.

- The Committee asked why state department directors were waiting for direction from the Governor's office rather than being proactive.
 - Ms. Takayama stated that she does not micromanage the directors.
 - They discussed and agreed on plans, but then it was the directors who needed to execute.
- The Committee relayed that the agencies have the understanding that everything goes through Ms. Takayama and that policies are being stalled there.
 - Ms. Takayama stated that she didn't believe this was the case.
- The Committee suggested that planning begin to avoid duplicating the errors of the COVID-19 response in future crises.
 - Ms. Takayama stated she would look into this issue.

Office of Enterprise Technology

Mr. Douglas Murdock, Chief Information Officer, provided the Committee the following update.

Unemployment Insurance System

- The Unemployment Insurance System relies on the state IT mainframe.
 - The antiquated system has been unable to accommodate increased traffic to the Unemployment Insurance web interface.
 - This has resulted in applicants not being able to submit claims online.
 - The high volume of traffic to the website comes from individuals signing on to check the status of their claims.
 - The State is developing a completely different website for individuals who want to check the status of their claims.
 - The State plans to reach out to other states to see if they have the capacity to help process Hawaii claims.
- Without proper quality control testing, the State cannot process the extra \$600 payment and pandemic assistance claims on the existing IT system.
 - They will be manually processing the new government assistance measures.

State Telework

- Bandwidth to Tax and Labor buildings has increased tenfold.
- The State has been tracking the volume of work completed by state workers by analyzing activities, such as email and work application usage.
- IT staff from all departments are working together to address increasing demands and support.
- The Committee inquired about how the current situation may be informing the State on how to better utilize telework moving forward.
- The State ensures that telework remains secure if employees use approved applications.
 - Zoom has become a popular application for team meetings, but there are cybersecurity issues, so the State is providing guidance to Departments on how to use the system safely.

- The State is attempting to update approved applications to offer similar capabilities as Zoom, such as conference calls.
- The State is determining the best system to allow more state workers to file social services forms over the phone while working from home, i.e., issue government cell phones.
- The Committee asked specifically what would be needed regarding training to allow telework to become a significant portion of the State's operations.

IT Modernization

- The State hopes to complete IT modernization, shifting processing from the state mainframe to a cloud-based system of departments within the next 4 to 5 years.
 - The ETS payroll system was the State's first system to come online.
 - The State had planned for the unemployment insurance system to be modernized within the next year.

Department of Taxation

Ms. Rona Suzuki, Director, provided the Committee the following update.

Safe Travels App

- Governor wanted an application that would augment the airport paper process.
- DBEDT is the responsible agency on this development of this app.
 - The vendor is Tapiki.
 - The original quote was \$65,000, and additional enhancements for mobile phone platforms (Apple and Android) are being discussed.
 - This amount may possibly be reimbursed by federal dollars.
- The app is being used by HIEMA and DOT staff operating the airport checkpoints and has replaced the paper process using the Agriculture form.
- Ideally, the traveler starts this process at the point of origin; otherwise, they present the confirmation screen at the HNL airport after going through the physical checkpoint.
 - They then receive an order regarding the requirements, and then they can proceed to their place of quarantine.
- Reports are generated daily and sent to HTA, the State, and the Counties for their enforcement.
- Once traveler proceeds to their location, they are expected to check-in daily.
- Travelers are asked the three questions that the CDC recommends.

Quarantine Definition

- The definition is governed by the Governor's order.
 - The department websites mirror the exact language of the Governor's orders.
- The document provided to travelers entering the State says that you can't leave the facility and go to the pool etc.
- All residents are under stay at home orders; can leave to get food and supplies etc.

- Returning residents flying in are not permitted to leave their residences except for medical care.

Verification Process

- Currently, the HTA and hotels verify the location of quarantine.
 - Ms. Suzuki assumed that HTA was verifying all arriving persons, including residents, but this may not be true.
 - The actual residence address is not being verified other than by checking the government-issued identification, such as a driver's license.
 - When pressed by the Committee, Ms. Suzuki confirmed they don't know whether people are complying with the quarantine order.
 - Ms. Suzuki is currently working with the Attorney General (AG) to enable the use of location services or an Opt-In choice with this application.
 - The Committee asked whether the law on the 14-day quarantine is broken if the visitor leaves before the 14-day period.
 - Ms. Suzuki agreed to take that question back to the AG.

General Excise Tax (GET) Payments

- DoTax has not changed the deadlines for GET returns and estimated payments.
 - Ms. Suzuki indicated that it was important for the State to continue its collections as a means of collecting information about the state of the economy.
 - This information is shared with other entities such as UHERO.
- The Director of Taxation does have certain powers to change deadlines for returns and payments but defers to the Governor at this time.
 - Ms. Suzuki admitted that in times like this, it is generally better that it comes out of the Governor's office.
- The Department has been updating our website and sending it out to our list 200,000 people and entities.

Federal Money

- Ms. Suzuki indicated that her role is to identify the funds available and work with the different directors to help them maximize the use of those funds.
- Not all grants have deadlines and guidance yet.
 - Senator Schatz's office is continuing to be very helpful in identifying awards and deadlines.
 - The Department of Budget and Finance will facilitate the tracking of the grants.
- The State has a list of the estimated \$4B coming to Hawaii.
 - The department directors are to compile additional information and to track the associated deadlines.
 - Ms. Suzuki is completing a map or matrix of this information and will share it with the Committee once it is complete.
 - Additionally, some grants are designated for private organizations for health and education needs.

- The State cannot use the Governor's relief fund of \$860M within the existing budget.
 - We are expecting guidance on the use of these funds this week.
- Regarding the stimulus checks to individual taxpayers, the money is now being sent by the IRS to those who have filed tax returns with direct deposit.
 - The IRS's second priority is to send money to those who don't have an automatic deposit account.
 - The IRS is working to find a better process.
- The Committee asked about Ms. Suzuki's expected timeframe in this role.
 - Ms. Suzuki indicated that she started a week ago and will continue for the duration of the need.
 - DoTax staffing is available to assist with some of this work.

Department of Human Resources Development

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

Redeployment Updates

- The list of category 3 employees eligible for redeployment has been reduced to 631 after removing volunteer staff, 89 day hires, employees on leave without pay, and staff working but not in their original capacity.
 - The Attorney General's Office has over 200 deputy attorney generals teleworking that also working additional hours to respond to inquires related to COVID 19.
 - This includes response to lawsuits related COVID19 and questions on legal authority for counties, state and legislators.
 - The greatest number of category 3 come from the Child Support Enforcement Agency.
- For DLIR, the current plan and timeline for increasing staffing:
 - 15 employees from the Attorney General's office and 3 from DHRD were sent out this week.
 - An additional 20 category 3 employees will be redeployed next week to DLIR, with an additional 20 employees if DLIR can ensure additional training facilities capacity.
 - The Committee once again committed staff and space to address the training and facilities concerns.
 - The Library system will be using its facilities to help with call centers.
 - 10 employees are slated to begin, but the Library System can increase employees by 10 each week.
- For DLIR, the greatest need is in 2 areas: UI call center and claims processing.
 - DHRD will began redeployment for those positions; however, DLIR is struggling with finding available space for call centers that accommodates social distancing.
 - DLIR will need help in 6 other areas in the Department.
- The Committee communicated a desire to redeploy enough staff to DLIR to facilitate an around the clock operation of processing claims and dispersing checks to the unemployed.

Report of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
Monday, April 13, 2020

- Besides DLIR, all other state Departments have failed to submit requests for additional staffing needs.
 - DHRD is prepared to match skillset of category 3 employees with the Departments' job descriptions once requests are received.
 - The Department of Agriculture and DBEDT submitted information to the Senate Committee using its form, but has not done so through DHRD forms.
- DHRD had released an agreement on principal with unions in the prior weeks but only submitted a detailed agreement on April 13th.
 - The details included a list of effected employees from categories 1, 2 and 3.
- Limitations of redeployment of category 3 include geographic/interisland restrictions.
- The process of notifying category 3 employees of possible redeployment:
 - DHRD contacts each Department's HR Office who will then notify category 3 employees of their status.
 - Once category 3 employees are redeployed, they will get information on their duties and responsibilities.

-end of report-