



The Senate

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Saturday, May 2, 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 30, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Department of Education
- Department of Transportation
- Hawaii Tourism Authority
- Department of Health
- Hawaii COVID-19 Public Health Recovery Taskforce

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

Department of Education (DOE)

Ms. Phyllis Unebasami, Deputy Superintendent, provided the Committee with the following update.

Graduation Ceremonies

- The department announced last week that schools would be providing alternative ceremonies due to the pandemic.
- The plan for virtual graduation ceremonies was announced today.
 - While all ceremonies will be virtual, they will be individualized by the school, with arrangements made by the school and the students.
 - Some schools will have online speakers (live or recorded).
 - All will allow online access by students & families and read the students' names out loud.
 - Some schools may do drive through diploma pickups.
 - Per the Committee's request, the department will consider whether at a future date to allow for the traditional "cap toss" part of the ceremony to take place.

Students and Distance Learning

- The department is meeting twice weekly with the superintendents to discuss COVID related issues and decision making on a multitude of topics.
- The department is meeting with principals about school-specific matters, and with unions on deciding how to manage labor issues.
- The schools are focused on student learning and ensuring that contact is made between the schools and the parents/students.
- Schools have websites with COVID-19 info including learning activities and scheduled times for teachers to engage with students.
 - Schools have set up equipment distribution for those students who do not have access to distance learning equipment such as tablets and laptops.
 - Equipment is expected to be collected beginning mid-May.
- Learning packets for students are being distributed by email, through websites and in person at meal sites.
 - Any school-age child who requests a learning packet while at a meal site is provided with that learning packet, without question and without being asked whether they attend a public, private, or charter school.
 - Due to the multiple distribution channels an accurate count of the number of learning packets distributed is not available.
 - For vulnerable students, schools and teachers have made numerous attempts to ensure learning packet distribution, including personal direct delivery of those packets by teachers to students.
- The department is exploring the possibility of creating learning hubs for vulnerable students.
 - These learning hubs may be housed in buses which would include school supplies and connectivity for distance learning.

- The department is also discussing plans with educational partners to establish community-based learning centers.
 - Per the Committee's request, the department will provide a copy of the plan for community-based learning hubs and other options for community learning centers.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will offer programs and opportunities to reach students with whom the schools have not been able to connect during the school closure period.
- The department is working to ensure that all Hawaii schools are providing equal levels of learning during this crisis.
 - The department has a state-level learning resources website that lists standards and includes resources.
 - All teachers have access to these standards-based curricular materials.
 - Teachers are collaborating on a peer to peer basis to share materials and methods.
 - The department is working to identify any learning gaps related to the pandemic and plans to use the summer months to reach out to students to close those gaps, including students for whom distance learning isn't practical.
 - The department has increased its online credit recovery program and substantially lowered the cost of that programs to the schools.
 - Per the Committee's request, the department will provide details and expenses related to the online credit recovery program.

Federal Recovery Funding for Education

- The department is the primary state education agency, so all federal funds will flow through the department, including any funds for private or charter schools.
- There are three possible federal funding streams.
 - The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, with \$43M in potential funds.
 - The Governors Emergency Relief Fund with \$9.9M in potential funds.
 - Relief funds for state & county government with \$1.25B in potential funding for which Hawaii may be eligible for some part.
 - The department is reviewing funding needs and priorities, including those for private and charter schools.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will provide the federal funds plan, including the funding needs and priorities, as identified by the department.

DOE Budget

- The department is looking at various scenarios to fund student-need priorities in the new budget and find needed cost savings in other areas.
- There is a partial purchasing freeze within the department now. Still, the priority is to focus any spending on COVID related student learning needs, and any freeze should not impact that spending.

- The department is working to identify priority items for the re-opening of schools next year.
 - Items that would typically be purchased ahead of the school year are on hold until those determinations can be made.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will provide an update on how the pandemic has impacted the department's budget.

Special Education Program

- Some special education students do not thrive while distance learning.
- The department is taking the needs of special education students seriously.
- The department held a webinar two weeks ago to focus on the needs of these students.
 - The department has posted resources in response to the issues raised on the webinar and is creating additional resources which should be ready next week.

School Meals Program

- The department has 72 "grab and go" meal sites running daily.
 - Locations are at schools and run by school staff who can help identify which students may need additional support and those who are not able to come to the site for meals.
 - This helps the department determine needs and focus on distributing in the communities not just at the school sites.
- Typically there is a gap between the school meals program and the summer meal program of 5 days.
 - Given the current situation, the department is working to avoiding any gap in the programs this year.
 - The summer program is also generally smaller, but the department is working to keep all 72 sites open for the summer.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will provide the budgetary needs of the meals programs and the plans to keep the programs fully operational.

Department of Transportation (DOT) & Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA)

Mr. Jade Butay, Director of DOT; Mr. Ross Higashi, Deputy Director of DOT - Airports; and Mr. Chris Tatum, CEO of HTA, provided the Committee with the following update.

Traveler Quarantine Procedures

- Within the past two weeks of the Airport Division's enhanced verification process:
 - Twenty-seven visitors were forced to leave Hawaii for quarantine violations or lacking proper lodging.
 - Three hundred thirty arrivals have been referred to law enforcement.
 - HTA has made over 14 thousand follow-up calls so far.
 - Enhanced verification for airports outside of Honolulu only began on Tuesday.

Report of the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19
Thursday, April 30, 2020

- Per the Committee's request, in regards to passenger processing, the department has replaced 24 of the 40 statewide contract workers with redeployed state workers.
 - The department explained that they are continuing to transition out contract workers for this purpose but did not indicate when this would be completed.
- To better identify travelers eluding the state's 14-day quarantine, the Committee requested that the DOT and HTA flag arrivals that have reservations for less than 14 days to be sure they have left Hawaii.
- The Committee requested updated data on follow-up calls, including:
 - How many times was HTA unable to reach quarantined arrivals?
 - Provide a breakout by visitors, intended residents, and residents.
 - How many were referred to law enforcement?
- The Committee also requested arrival data, including:
 - A breakout of arriving intended residents, i.e., how many are military, college, etc.
 - How many referred to law enforcement?
 - How many of those were allowed to stay in Hawaii, and how many had to leave?
- The Committee then requested projections of the number of flights and passengers per day for the month of May.
- Although an enhanced verification system includes calling hotels directly for a visitor's reservations and compliance, the Airports Division does not call residential locations, including legal or illegal vacation rentals, to verify the arriving passenger will be staying at the location.
 - The Committee requested a copy of DOT's enhanced verification procedures.
 - Additionally, the Committee requested that calls be made to residential addresses to verify if, and for how long, the passengers will be staying there.
 - Furthermore, the Committee asked that they consider visiting residential locations to be sure the arrivals are quarantining.
- Unless the county has deemed vacation rentals as non-essential, visitors are allowed to stay at vacation rentals, because the restriction is not in the emergency proclamation.
 - The Committee recommend that Mayors should fine residential owners if visitors violate quarantine.
- The Airports Division & HTA recognize the enhanced verification system's current capacity and processes would not be effective if arrivals would increase over current levels.
 - The Committee insisted that DOT develop a plan on how enhanced verification could ramp up if the travel industry re-opens.
- The Committee insisted that DOT, HTA, and Counties initiate an MOA with standardized procedures on enforcement of quarantine and not leave oversight to HIEMA.
- HTA sent letters to airlines, and online travel portals requesting websites to provide more information on the travel quarantine before travelers booked flights.
 - Delta, Expedia, and one other responded. HTA will follow-up again with others.

Department of Health (DOH)

Dr. Bruce Anderson, Director; and Dr. Sarah Park, State Epidemiologist, provided the Committee with the following update.

Disease Surveillance Program

- This is a long-running program done in all states to track and quantify the spread of disease.
 - Systematic, widespread, random testing is done to trace the spread of the diseases.
- Sentinel Program
 - Doctors report weekly on the number of patients they have seen and the number that may have an infectious disease such as the flu.
 - Positive test results are shared with the state lab.
 - Positive test cases are then investigated by the department through its case investigation (contact tracing program).
- Mortality tracking – causes of mortality are traced.
- Airport surveillance
 - International air carriers are required to report if they suspect that a passenger may have a flu-like disease.
 - Airport medical personnel examine the passenger.
 - If the airport medical personnel suspect a flu-like disease, they contact the department.
 - The department then tests, with the passenger's consent, of flu-like illnesses and then tracks that disease.
- Syndromic testing - not yet a part of the state program.
 - A certain set of symptoms that may indicate a communicable disease are reported to the department.
 - Diseases symptoms could then be tracked.
 - Funding to start such a program was secured before the start of the pandemic, but the program has not yet been implemented.
- Antibody testing – not yet a part of the state program, but may be added if a reliable antibody test for COVID 19 is created.
 - Antibody testing would show who was exposed to the diseases and how widely the virus spreads.
- Dr. Anderson confirmed that as the director, he has the authority to order the isolation of an individual, but only after that individual has tested positive for an infectious disease.
 - Dr. Anderson stated that his powers as the director would not extend to forced isolation for the purpose of prevention due to a suspected positive.
 - Dr. Anderson added that to date, all individuals identified as requiring isolation have willingly complied with the 14-day quarantine.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will provide documentation on this program, including infographics.

Case Investigation and Contact Tracing

- If a patient tests positive, then that patient is isolated or quarantined as necessary.
- The department then traces the close contacts of that patient.
 - The department tests any symptomatic close contacts of the patient.
 - Positive close contacts are isolated or quarantined.
 - The process is then repeated down the chain of contacts.
- Per the Committee's request, the department will provide documentation on this program, including infographics.

Governor's Proclamation of a 14-Day Quarantine

- Dr. Park stated that from her perspective, the state should maintain the 14-day quarantine for as long as possible.
- Dr. Anderson added that "from a public health perspective, the 14-day quarantine has been extraordinarily effective, but there is some concern with non-compliance."
- The Committee questioned the state's ability to maintain enforcement as the numbers of visitors continue to increase.
 - The Committee insisted that it be made clear at all levels of government that the 14-day quarantine will be in place for the near future, and that plans must be made now to ensure that it can be managed and enforced as visitor numbers increase.
- The Committee highlighted its concern with the Governor's proclamation requiring a 14-day quarantine, but not a 14-day hotel reservation.
 - In response, Dr. Anderson stated that "I would want to make sure that the person has a place to stay for the 14 days," later adding, "who knows what is going to happen after five days, I wouldn't want to trust that they're going to renew their hotel room."
- The Committee asked that the department take an active role in advising the Governor on future proclamations, and to discuss the inconsistencies of the Governor's current proclamations.
 - Dr. Anderson indicated that he would do so.

Hawaii COVID-19 Public Health Recovery Taskforce

Dr. Mark Mugiishi, provided the Committee the following update.

Taskforce Plan Development

- The Hawaii COVID-19 Public Health Recovery Taskforce is a voluntary public and private coalition that is developing a plan of best practices for re-opening our state.
 - The coalition includes leaders from state agencies, businesses, healthcare systems and more.
 - The plan provides a tiered approach based on COVID-19 risks to public health and our state's preparedness to address surges of the virus.
 - Risk levels are determined by factors such as the rate of transmission, number of active cases, possibly the season

- Preparation includes available testing, contact tracing, and healthcare capacity
 - The four tiers of risk indicate best practices for government response, as well as for businesses.
 - This will allow for a slow relaxation of social distancing and a quick response to the virus' reescalation
- The "Playbooks" will help businesses determine when and how to re-open safely. For example, what are proper social distancing techniques for restaurants, etc.
 - Businesses will know which playbook to use based on its level contact intensity.
- The Taskforce plans to finalize the plans by the end of next week and present it to the Governor.
 - The Taskforce hopes to coordinate with HIEMA in developing strategies for relaxing social distancing that is based on best practices from other states and countries
- The Taskforce recommends re-opening the travel industry when the state's health risk is at Alert Level 1 or when COVID-19 is contained, and the state is capable of quickly addressing any surges.

-end of report-