



## The Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

December 14, 2020

Honorable Ronald Kouchi  
President of the Senate  
Thirtieth State Legislature  
State of Hawaii

Dear Sir:

Re: Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19

Meeting on December 9, 2020  
1:00 p.m.  
Hawaii State Capitol

Your Senate Special Investigating Committee on COVID-19, established pursuant to S.R. No. 198, S.D. 1 (Regular Session of 2020), begs leave to report as follows:

The purpose and intent of the Committee is to:

- (1) Assess and advise the Senate regarding the State of Hawaii's COVID-19 plans and procedures;
- (2) Confirm the development of state and county departmental plans and procedures;
- (3) Review and assess current state and county departmental plans and procedures;
- (4) Review and assess whether state and county departmental plans and procedures are properly and timely implemented to safeguard public health and safety;

- (5) Review, assess, and monitor the State's expenditure of federal and state COVID-19 relief funds;
- (6) Communicate and disseminate information obtained therefrom; and
- (7) Issue subpoenas.

On December 9, 2020, your Committee met with the following:

- (1) Dr. Joshua Green, Lieutenant Governor for the State of Hawaii;
- (2) Dr. Darragh O'Carroll, Emergency Medicine Physician and Every1ne Founder;
- (3) Mayor Mitch Roth, County of Hawaii;
- (4) Mayor Michael Victorino, County of Maui;
- (5) Mayor Kirk Caldwell, City and County of Honolulu;
- (6) Mayor Derek Kawakami, County of Kauai; and
- (7) Ms. Clare Connors, Attorney General for the State of Hawaii.

## **FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

### **I. Updates and Concerns for the City and County of Honolulu**

Mayor Kirk Caldwell explained to your Committee that he submitted an order to the Governor asking for three considerations regarding the protocols and procedures relating to the State's response to COVID-19:

- (1) Allow people who have taken a pre-travel test, but are awaiting the results, to bypass the mandatory quarantine period of ten days (previously fourteen days) by taking a PCR test at the City and County of Honolulu's mobile lab, which can administer up to ten thousand tests per day and provide results within two to three hours;
- (2) Require individuals who are exempt from quarantine requirements due to a CISA exemption to have a negative test result; and

- (3) Address concerns regarding people who do not take a pre-travel test by providing a test at the airport upon arrival and an additional test four days later and requiring them to download a tracing application.

Mayor Caldwell also shared that around twenty thousand people on Oahu are in quarantine at any given time, which places a heavy burden on the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) in enforcing quarantine, and that a reduction in the time people are forced to quarantine will make it easier to enforce the quarantine mandates.

Senator Donna Mercado Kim expressed concerns about how the quarantine requirements are being enforced since a member of her staff, who traveled from and returned to Hawaii, was required to quarantine, but not contacted during the staff member's quarantine period.

Senator Donovan Dela Cruz stated that it was his understanding that the Hawaii Tourism Authority was supposed to be responsible for checking up on individuals under quarantine, but was not sure if that responsibility is now placed under HPD.

Senator Michelle Kidani expressed concerns about the responsibilities of HPD as it relates to individuals who break quarantine and if funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act are being used to fund those operations. Mayor Caldwell confirmed that funding from the CARES Act is not presently being used to fund HPD for quarantine enforcement and assured that HPD investigates tips related to quarantine breakers from members of the public.

Senator Sharon Moriwaki inquired about the alignment between HPD, the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Planning and Permitting, and other government agencies in short-term rental enforcement. However, due to the nature and focus of the hearing, Senator Dela Cruz requested that Mayor Caldwell respond to Senator Moriwaki's request in writing at a later time.

Senator Kidani further inquired about the possibility of including a second test requirement for individuals arriving the State and how the State plans on receiving visitors and residents who are vaccinated.

## **II. Safe Travels Program**

Lieutenant Governor Dr. Josh Green provided updates on various metrics and data points relating to COVID-19 in the State, including that Hawaii had the lowest infection rate and death rate for the past week in the United States, the third lowest infection rate and death rate from March to December in the United States, and a hospitalization rate of seven per every one hundred cases.

Lieutenant Governor Green also shared data relating to the Safe Travels Program, including statewide totals for screenings, exemptions, and those in quarantine; the fifty-five percent decrease in the number of hospitalizations since the start of the Safe Travels Program; number of visitors to the State; projected economic impact; weekly unemployment claims; and health and housing impacts. He also shared a general plan on how vaccine distributions are envisioned to occur.

Senator Dela Cruz expressed concerns about the data for the number of active cases of travelers who arrive in Hawaii from other states and how that data could be used to identify whether cases in the State are a result of community spread or out-of-state travelers.

Lieutenant Governor Green clarified the length of time that surveillance testing is being conducted after arrival for individuals, which varies per county: six days for Maui County, four days for the City and County of Honolulu, and one day for Hawaii County.

Senator Mercado Kim expressed concerns about the number of individuals under the exemption category as indicated by the data. Lieutenant Governor Green explained that those in the exemption category were exempted for a variety of reasons, the most significant of which includes participation in the Safe Travels Program. Lieutenant Governor Green also stated that most of the trusted partners that provide testing for the Safe Travels Program could meet the critical three-day testing turnaround requirement, although CVS, a current trusted partner, could not make that promise due to an increase in demand for testing.

Senator Michelle Kidani inquired about the expected surge of infections as a result of Thanksgiving gatherings, which Lieutenant Governor Green believes the State has already bypassed without significant increases, and how the State will deal with international travelers and trusted partners in those various countries.

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole inquired about the leadership transition of the Safe Travel Program after the CARES Act funding ends at the end of 2020. Lieutenant Governor Green assured your Committee that Major General Kenneth Hara from the Hawaii Emergency Management Agency will continue to be in charge of the Safe Travels Program and further clarified his own role in providing recommendations for the program.

Senator Kurt Fevella expressed concerns about challenges in uploading test results on the Safe Travels Program application for interisland travel.

Senator Kidani further inquired of Attorney General Clare Connors on whether there was anything that could be done through legislation at either the federal or state level to further deter travelers from boarding an airplane if they know they have tested positive

for COVID-19. Ms. Connors replied that she could look further into the enforcement aspects of such a proposal.

### **III. Research and Economic and Public Health Considerations**

Dr. Darragh O'Carroll shared a presentation that included his personal history of education in the current pandemic, a brief history of the 1918 H1N1 pandemic and coronaviruses, various topics and points of consideration as they relate to COVID-19, and economic and other public health considerations.

When asked by Senator Moriwaki what his recommendation for the best protocol for allowing travelers to enter the State, Dr. O'Carroll replied that he would like to require a test three days prior to flying, a test on the day of travel, a mandatory quarantine period upon arrival, and a second test administered between three to five days after arrival. However, Dr. O'Carroll acknowledges that these requirements may not be logistically possible. Furthermore, Dr. O'Carroll mentioned digital contact tracing through an application, which is something that Ireland has implemented for its citizens.

### **IV. Updates and Concerns for Hawaii County, Maui County, and Kauai County**

Hawaii County Mayor Mitch Roth updated your Committee on their airport testing, which is in jeopardy of running out of funding when funds from the CARES Act are no longer available. However, private partners in the community have agreed to help with the cost of testing so that testing at the airports can continue.

Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino updated your Committee on the conditions in Maui County and would like to see members of the House of Representatives and Senate work together to get some consensus moving forward.

Kauai County Mayor Derek Kawakami updated your Committee on the conditions in Kauai County, including why the county opted out of the Safe Travels Program. Mayor Kawakami acknowledged that while the Safe Travels Program may work for the State and other counties, the program does not seem to work for Kauai County at this time. He also acknowledged that absolute uniformity between the counties with respect to the Safe Travels Program is not a reasonable expectation given that each county is faced with varying situations that may require divergent responses.

### **V. Closing Remarks**

Senator Dela Cruz requested that the mayors submit a written response to your Committee regarding their respective county's experience with the Safe Travels Program and the quarantine enforcement component.

Your Committee adjourned the meeting at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Senate Special Investigating Committee  
on COVID-19

Sen. Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole  
Sen. Michelle Kidani  
Sen. Donna Mercado Kim  
Sen. Sharon Moriwaki  
Sen. Kurt Fevella

cc: All Senators