SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

URGING THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO REPORT CURRENT CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 STATISTICS IN ORDER TO HELP PROTECT THE MILITARY AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY INSTALLATIONS ARE LOCATED.

WHEREAS, the State hosts numerous military installations for the United States Indo-Pacific Command including United States Coast Guard Station Maui, which is among the most active military installations operated by the United States Coast Guard; and

WHEREAS, on March 31, 2020, United States Defense Secretary Mark Esper ordered all commanders of the Department of Defense (DoD) installations worldwide to cease publicly releasing new coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) statistical information; and

WHEREAS, at the time of the March 31, 2020, order, the number of infected personnel at these installations, which include all military bases, was already one thousand cases; and

WHEREAS, although Secretary Esper intended that the order protect the operational security at DoD global installations, the responsibility to the neighboring communities has been neglected, since members of the military and their dependents actively engage with the communities at shopping areas, restaurants, and other public gathering places; and

WHEREAS, although Chief Pentagon Spokesman Jonathan Hoffman stated that Defense Department leaders worried that adversaries could exploit COVID-19 information, especially if the data showed the outbreak impacted U.S. nuclear forces or other critical units, concern for the local communities neighboring the military installations was not expressed, thus suggesting that the health and safety of said communities was not in jeopardy; and
WHEREAS, on Oahu, the numbers of infections as of August 2020 had begun to surge, yet the military population's statistics remained unreported but may have been in excess of one hundred; and

WHEREAS, per the DoD Defense Manpower Data Center, the total active military population in the State is 36,620, and the Reserve Forces number 9,402, which does not include the families of the military personnel living on-base, nor does it provide disaggregated data for native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations subject to COVID-19 infections; and

WHEREAS, although the DoD has released near-daily COVID-19 statistics on its website, the statistics are delayed and not disaggregated by base or even by State; and

WHEREAS, as of August 2020, the DoD reported on its website the cumulative total cases (military, civilian DoD workers, dependents, and military contractors) was 43,634 with 1,056 hospitalizations, 22,235 recoveries, and seventy-two deaths; and

WHEREAS, although the DoD's website lists numerous memoranda indicating procedures to control the COVID-19 spread, it is unclear what protocols are set to protect the neighboring communities adjacent to the military installations in which military personnel and their dependents traverse; and

WHEREAS, whenever the aforesaid personnel and their dependents encounter the local neighboring communities, the communities are exposed to communicable sicknesses in their interactions; and

WHEREAS, even after the order to installation commanders to censor disaggregated COVID-19 information, and notwithstanding the many DoD memos calling for preventative methods with respect to trainings, meeting, or other work-related gathering behaviors, several Hawaii news sources, as well as the Department of Land and Natural Resources reported two large gatherings each with more than two hundred participants located off military bases (at Mokuleia, Kaena Point, and Waimea Bay) by
military personnel and their families during the Memorial Day weekend; and

WHEREAS, not only were the gatherings in excess of the ten-person allowance rule established by the State and City and County of Honolulu, but also at that time, beaches were closed for any gatherings, and yet the two hundred plus participants disregarded the beach closures; and

WHEREAS, breaking state and county restrictions on gathering could be interpreted as a belief that military personnel who report to the DoD and the federal government are exempt from State and county laws; and

WHEREAS, potentially unclear DoD COVID-19 protocols of quarantine could contribute to super spreading the virus; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the House of Representatives concurring, that this body urges the United States DoD is urged to report current COVID-19 statistics (disaggregated by individual geographic installations and specific data to identify native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander military and DoD populations affected by COVID-19) in order to help protect the military communities and especially the local communities in which the government and military installations are located; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the DoD reports this information to the Department of Health, and the Department of Health make this information public; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the United States Secretary of Defense, Governor, Director of Health, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and Mayors of each of the Counties.