

## OPEN LETTER

Maui, HI, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020

From: The Maui Healthcare Provider Community

To: Bruce S. Anderson, PhD, Director, Department of Health, State of Hawaii

Via Email to: [Bruce.S.Anderson@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:Bruce.S.Anderson@doh.hawaii.gov)

Michael Victorino, Mayor, County of Maui, State of Hawaii

Via Email to: [Mayors.Office@co.maui.hi.us](mailto:Mayors.Office@co.maui.hi.us)

Tyson Miyake, Chief of Staff, County of Maui, State of Hawaii

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David Ige, Governor, State of Hawaii

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The Maui physician community has significant concerns about the recent reports of COVID-19 cases on Maui and the lack of measures that were taken by the leadership to contain or mitigate the spread of the virus. Reports from countries a few weeks ahead in the epidemiological curve require our state leadership to take immediate action to address the potential spread of COVID-19 in our community.

A group from Italy has reported in the medical journal Lancet on March 13, 2020, that 9-11% of patients infected with SARS-CoV 2 require ICU care. If we extrapolate this to our population in Maui of 167,207, even if only 1% of our population contracts SARS-CoV 2, we would need more than 150 ICU beds on Maui. The capacity of the hospital is 29 ICU rooms with 32 patient ventilators. There are an additional 14 anesthesia machines in the operating rooms. If the infection rate rises above 1 percent, which is very likely, we will have a situation as in Italy where doctors have to triage which patients can get appropriate care and others which are asked to stay at home to be left to die. Some epidemiological studies report that 70-80% of people worldwide will contract the virus during this pandemic.

We currently do not know the prevalence on Maui as the availability of test kits is limited and widespread testing is currently not possible. We are left to measures recommended by the CDC such as social distancing and quarantine which is suggested by epidemiologists to flatten the curve of infection and slow down the spread of the virus. Even with these measures, our healthcare system is still very likely to be overwhelmed and our people will suffer dire consequences.

Case numbers and fatalities are rising fast in the U.S. Our federal government has been slow to use these lessons and create a national plan of action. Therefore, it is up to local state, county and city governments to take the lead. Even though we have a small number of infected people on the island, we believe that municipal transmission is occurring and soon we will face an exponential spread of the virus and more patients requiring hospitalization. We should not assume that because our numbers are low that we will be spared by a rise of infections in the near future not even mentioning a pandemic. When looking at the national rate of increase one can see that case numbers are doubling daily which indicates exponential spread. We have also learned that as many as 80% of cases are asymptomatic or have minimal symptoms and most of the transmission is through asymptomatic people. In the countries that have effectively mitigated the spread (China, Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong), early, aggressive and strict control of people's social interactions is the primary strategy. Without deploying this strategy effectively, we risk significantly higher numbers of infection in the next few weeks with the real possibility of overwhelming our hospitals.

The Maui Healthcare Provider Community strongly suggests the following:

1. Abandonment of all non-essential travel to Maui, by air and cruise ships.
2. Screening of all tourists currently on Maui.
3. Mandatory 14-day quarantine of all tourists arriving on Maui with regular check-in about their health status.
4. Closing of schools, childcare facilities, bars and restaurants.
5. Cancelling of public events and any gathering of people.
6. Closure of all non-essential businesses and offices for 14 days or more.
7. Mandate that Maui citizens stay at home and leave the home for only essential needs such as grocery shopping or healthcare visits.

We do understand that these measures represent a hardship for the community of Maui. We do believe strongly that the consequence of not enforcing these drastic measures right now will lead to a significant healthcare problem and a more severe impact on the economy later on if we fail to act right now.

We ask the Government of Maui to endorse the measures recommended by our physician community as quickly as possible. We are in a critical stage of community spread during which every day counts.

Sincerely,  
The Maui Healthcare Provider Community

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