

OPEN LETTER

Hawai'i, August, 2020

From: The Hawai'i Healthcare Provider Community

To: The Honorable David Ige, Governor of the State of Hawai'i
Josh Green, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Hawai'i
Major General Kenneth Hara, Adjutant General, Department of Defense, State of Hawai'i
Department of Health, State of Hawai'i; Ron Kouchi, President of the State Senate; J. Kalani English, Majority
Leader
Kurt Fevella, Minority Leader; Scott Saiki, Speaker of the State House of Representatives
The Honorable Mayor Kirk Caldwell (Honolulu); The Honorable Mayor Michael Victorino (Maui);
The Honorable Mayor Harry Kim (Hawai'i); The Honorable Mayor Derek S.K. Kawakami (Kauai)

We are now in an accelerated epidemic phase of COVID-19 transmission driven by rapidly developing outbreaks in clustered high risk locations and populations throughout the State.

HDOH and other public health programs in the USA have undergone reductions in funding and personnel for the last decade. National epidemic response plans have been abandoned and discarded since 2016. This is not meant to defend the inadequate response to COVID-19 in Hawai'i since March 2020, but to highlight that all public health institutions in the United States are under unprecedented demands to rapidly develop new programs. There is widespread inability to provide public health leadership in order to address the control and elimination of COVID-19 in the State of Hawai'i.

Dramatic and urgent action has to be taken without delay. **We recommend forming a Hawai'i emergency operations center immediately in response to COVID-19.** To do this, we need to deploy new leadership to direct COVID interventions including expanded numbers of contact tracing personnel and use of other larger facilities to house them. We recommend the appointment of an administrator with comprehensive decision making authority with respect to COVID-19 whose goal is to eliminate transmission of COVID-19 in Hawai'i. It is imperative to coordinate decision making in both private and public sectors more closely and to have an administrator who can cut through red tape and act expeditiously. Ideally, this person would be in the field of public health, epidemiology, and/or medicine and have administrative experience. Recruitment should consider those outside the DOH administration.

Sincerely,

Hawai'i Healthcare Community