

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)

Hawai'i faces the most urgent public health crisis in at least a hundred years. It is imperative that we come together as a community and make critical decisions to reduce the threat COVID-19 poses to the health and lives of our citizens. We understand the difficulty in reaching sustainable, successful strategies for eliminating COVID-19, while meeting real community needs and opening up our economy. Our Hawai'i healthcare provider community would like to lend a voice to our leaders, as we humbly propose what we consider to be priorities with life or death implications. We are fortunate to have New Zealand as an example, where "national leaders decisively switched from a mitigation strategy to an elimination strategy...combating the pandemic as the work of a unified 'team of 5 million.'" ("Successful Elimination of Covid-19 Transmission in New Zealand", August, 7, 2020; New England Journal of Medicine). Today, with the benefit of perspective gained from Hawai'i's long months attempting mitigation practices, **we urge our Hawai'i leadership to adopt a COVID-19 elimination strategy, which is truly the solution for Hawai'i's economic recovery.** These are our recommendations to eliminate COVID-19 in Hawai'i:

1. Strengthen Contact Tracing

- a. Activate and utilize all 450 trained contact tracers and Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers. Continue active recruiting and training of case investigators/contact tracers.
- b. Formalize relationships with community health workers and community health centers to assist with tracing. Incorporate community leaders, such as the Pacific Islander community leaders.
- c. Develop a protocol for training case investigators/contact tracers. Implement use of HIPAA-compliant platform, facilitating communication for contact tracers. Provide contact tracers with electronic devices, forms, and tools they need to work effectively.
- d. Implement a voluntary, privacy protected and secured, app-based technology that allows for instant notification of close COVID+ contacts as soon as possible. Anonymity and data privacy are key priorities.

2. COVID-19 Testing

- a. Purchase additional equipment and materials for COVID-19 testing in Hawai'i, with the goal of becoming self-sustainable in Hawai'i. We have identified and vetted vendors and stand ready to assist you with our recommendations. Also be aggressive about implementing the next generation of COVID-19 rapid testing.
- b. Implement routine testing for high risk groups (ie: hospitals; first responders; nursing homes; schools; airport; DOT; essential workers). Use a "Pooled Testing" method as available, followed by individualized PCR testing within COVID+ groups.
- c. Give attention to the opportunity of utilizing CARES act funding.

3. Public Guidance

- a. **Require mask-wearing**, if unable to social distance 6+ feet when in the presence of non-household members. Enforce fines for non-compliance.
- b. Create a user-friendly online source with **a simplified view of all current restrictions by county**. To reduce public confusion, people should be able to select their location and access all updated public health orders.

- c. Use existing resources, such as community health center partners and local businesses, to launch a daily public education campaign reinforcing the 7 W's (Wash hands, Wear a mask, Watch your distance, Wide open spaces, Wipe high touch surfaces, Wellness - stay home if you're ill, WE are in this Together). Use all platforms, including social media, print/mail, electronic mail, visual signage, news media, and cable TV.
- d. Minimize numbers of people in indoor and outdoor gatherings and enforce social distancing. Use scientific benchmarks as criteria for lifting restrictions.
- e. Be transparent with the public. Provide clear data on number of active contact tracers and dates, numbers and general locations of COVID+ exposures.

4. Travel Requirements

- a. Ensure compliance with quarantine. Enhance quarantine compliance by using app-based technology as soon as available. Provide a written explanation of quarantine rules (translated as needed) to all arriving travelers.
- b. Encourage all incoming non-resident travelers to self-quarantine in a state approved quarantine hotel/lodging establishment or legal short-term rental facility.
- c. Work with representatives of Hawai'i's hotel and lodging industry to establish state-wide COVID-19 safety standards for our hotel and lodging establishments.
- d. Adopt, at minimum, a two-step COVID-19 testing strategy for all travelers, including essential workers and returning residents.
 - i. Encourage proof of a valid COVID-19 negative test, conducted by an authorized medical office, no less than 48 hours prior to departure. Travelers should be advised to stay home after the pre-flight test.
 - ii. Encourage airlines to require mask-wearing during the entire flight.
 - iii. Continue the requirement that all arriving persons must quarantine for 14 days. Quarantine only to be lifted with proof of a negative COVID-19 test, taken on island, 7 or more days after arrival. This should apply to persons of all ages. Consider the addition or substitution of other feasible test methods as they become available.
- e. Travel for essential workers:
 - i. Encourage public/private employers to hire on-island workers to reduce frequency of travel.
 - ii. Require an approval process for essential workers to break quarantine. Require documentation of: (1) Detailed "critical infrastructure function" and justification for need to break quarantine upon arrival, (2) Date of arrival and expected date of departure, (3) Workplace Name/address
 - iii. Provide a written explanation of quarantine rules to essential workers upon arrival. Clearly indicate that the worker is not exempt from quarantine, other than to perform critical infrastructure functions. Require workers to wear appropriate PPE and follow safe practices while working. We must not allow essential workers to become an unaddressed gap in COVID-19 prevention measures.
- f. Review the following papers we support: "Prevention of Travel-related Reintroduction of COVID-19 Infection in the State of Hawai'i", published by UHERO East-Center John A. Burns School of Medicine and "Plan for Safely Re-Opening Hawai'i: Kaua'i as a Model".

We, in Hawai'i, have the opportunity to become a "team of 1.4 million", uniting to eliminate COVID-19. This letter embodies this sentiment, as it represents a unified effort between scientists, epidemiologists, nurses, physicians, dentists, public health workers, healthcare professionals, administrators, hotel/tourism representatives, economists, and teachers across the islands of Hawai'i (Moloka'i, Lana'i, Kaua'i, Hawai'i, O'ahu and Maui). We strongly advocate collaboration, and urge that state-wide decisions regarding COVID-19 reflect a solid consensus between state leaders and the health sciences advisory committees.

Sincerely,

Hawai'i Healthcare Community