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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to adapt to a new norm.

While the State Capitol has been shuttered and the legislative session in recess since mid-March, my staff and I have continued to work on your behalf, answer questions and concerns, and represent you as best we can. These are difficult and trying times, but keeping you abreast of the latest developments should provide some assurance that your health and safety are foremost among our concerns. The Legislature will reconvene on May 11 to address the state budget shortfall and manage the CARES ACT funding.

Easing of Closures: Governor Ige announced the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. Certain businesses as well as parks and beaches will reopen, provided social distancing is maintained. This is a welcome development after weeks of a near-total lockdown and a hopeful sign that our state's path to economic recovery has begun.

Senate COVID Committee:

As one of six Senators appointed to the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19, we have been overseeing the state's response to the pandemic, assessing plans and procedures, and disseminating information to the public. From the onset of this crisis, we have been meeting with government officials to scrutinize the state's responses, assess their effectiveness in safeguarding public health, and press our leaders for quick and decisive action. While our committee is advisory, we have been very candid in our recommendations and sharing your concerns and ours with the executive branch.



Senate Special Committee on COVID-19

Work to Date: Our Senate committee prompted the state to establish the 14-day quarantine for all arriving visitors and returning residents. Just last week, we visited the airport to see first-hand the screening protocols. We continue to press Labor Department officials to improve their responses to the huge backlog of Unemployment Insurance claims. The Senate staff wrote the UI training manual and the Legislature provided more than 100 staff members to help process claims. We also urged the governor to seek the postponement of the RIMPAC military exercises, and we're pleased the Navy rescheduled the event to mid-August. Rest assured that our oversight efforts will remain as strong as ever.

Be Informed: You can keep informed of what we are doing by following the broadcasts of our Senate meetings on 'Olelo's television and its website. In addition, we post our reports, agendas, and other resources at <capitol.hawaii.gov> under the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 link.

I have personally responded to countless phone calls and emails expressing your concerns, frustration, gratitude, heartbreaking stories, and more. Please know that I hear you loud and clear and will continue to be your voice.

Mahalo for doing your part to protect yourself and your family. If we are to succeed in this battle, it is vital that we care for one another and stay positive.



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LEGISLATURE RECONVENES

The Hawaii Legislature will reconvene on Monday, May 11 to address the state's impending budget crisis brought on by COVID-19. The session is expected to run between 6 to 10 days. Besides considering an estimated \$1 billion in budget cuts from the \$8 billion general fund budget, the Senate also needs to finish confirmation hearings for state board and commission members. All meetings will be live on Olelo and the public can submit written testimony.

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims

Finally DLIR is implementing your suggestion to limit filings by last name. For **Weekly Certification** Filings only by last names beginning:

- A - G Monday; H - O Tuesday; P - Z Wednesday; Thursday, Friday, Sat., Sun., for those who were unable to get in on their alphabet day.
- After much pushing from the Senate Committee, the state redeployed workers to alleviate the overloaded Labor UI processing department.
(55) Group 3 employees were deployed, while (45) Group 3 employees volunteered at DLIR. (237) Group 3 employees are still eligible for redeployment.
- 74 DLIR employees were reassigned & 18 state workers were transferred to UI by Dept. of Human Resources & Development (DHRD).
- 120 volunteers from the Senate, House and Legislative Ref. Bureau staff.
- 443 total volunteers from all state agencies.
- DLIR completed the automation of the \$600 federal 'plus ups' on April 25.
- The Senate committee continues to push DLIR & DHRD to expedite the process and get UI checks to those in need.



Senate Committee tours UI claims center

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)

New federal relief program that provides UI benefits to individuals not normally eligible for UI benefits, such as those who are self-employed, independent contractors, have limited recent work, and must have a disqualification from UI. Pre-applications available at: pua.hawaii.gov. Applications will begin processing on May 15.

Travel Restrictions

- Senators have been unsuccessful in convincing Gov. Ige to join the mayors in calling for the restriction of all non-essential travel to Hawaii. In the meantime, we have urged state tourism and transportation officials to adopt stricter screening protocols for arriving passengers, verify lodging, supervise transportation to accommodations, and enforce monitoring and compliance with the quarantine.
- After our first-hand inspection of the airport screening operations, we requested that prior to leaving the airport passengers have their hotel reservations/private addresses confirmed and checked for legal & illegal vacation rentals, verbal and signed acknowledgement of the quarantine document, and random phone calls to ensure visitor compliance with the quarantine.
- Additionally, we requested the administration to consider issuing immediate fines, like parking tickets, to strengthen the deterrence for violations. Rental car companies be banned from renting vehicles to visitors during the quarantine period. We have also asked the Attorney General to work with hotels to limit room exits & re-entries during the 14 day quarantine, which could include having hotels withhold room keys so visitors are unable to come-and-go without alerting hotel staff.
- With arriving travelers increasing despite restrictions, some have called for even stricter rules. We have been advised that proposals such as: requiring a designated quarantine site without a crime and due process, requiring a minimum stay of 14 days, and the use of monitoring technology, all potentially violate constitutional rights.
- To report a violation of the visitor quarantine, call HPD at 911.



Committee inspects airport screenings