

# NEWS AND UPDATES FROM Representative Troy N. Hashimoto

## March/April 2021

*Aloha!* A long awaited third round of federal stimulus will be arriving just in time to help the state balance its budget for the upcoming year and will help to restore some of the anticipated reductions to public services. The State House's version of the budget was passed to the Senate in late March. Businesses are anticipated to receive critical relief as the Legislature's current plan is to use a portion of its federal stimulus to repay \$742 million that was borrowed to pay unemployment costs that would have historically been required to be paid back by businesses where former employees made unemployment claims.

The new funding, along with a possible easing of travel restrictions, should assist in the recovery efforts of our economy. I am especially optimistic with the rollout of additional vaccines, because for Hawai'i, a full recovery will only happen when travel restrictions are eased.

Although this session has proven to be unlike any other, I continue to focus on the needs of our community. At the midway point of the session, over 500 bills were still alive, and only about half of them will eventually become law. I have heard from many of you over the last few months on bills that are of most concerning to you, and I appreciate the feedback – please feel free to continue reaching out.

My office remains open, and my staff is willing to help. Please do not hesitate to reach out at (808) 586-9444 or by email at RepHashimoto@capitol.hawaii.gov.

Mahalo,



With Mayor Michael Victorino presenting iPads to Pu'u Kukui Elementary School Principal Chad Okamoto. Through a collaboration, Rep. Hashimoto worked with the County of Maui to provide 400 devices from federal CARES funds to public schools around Maui County including Pu'u Kukui.

## House passes \$33.88 billion FY 2021-2023 state budget

The House passed H.B. 200 HD1 on March 24 which is fiscal year 2021-2023 state budget which includes \$31.36 billion for operating expenses and \$2.52 billion for capital improvement projects. The Senate will now have their opportunity to add their revisions with final amendments made during a conference committee in April.

Notable projects Capital Improvement Projects for Central Maui from the House draft of the bill include:

- ☑ **\$3 million** for design and construction of a campus wide electrical upgrade for future campus wide air conditioning at *H.P. Baldwin High*.
- ☑ **\$800,000** for the design of a covered playground at *Waihe'e Elementary*.
- ☑ **\$5 million** for design and construction for security improvements and parking structure renovations at *Hoapili Hale (Wailuku Court House)*.
- ☑ **\$200,000** for design and construction for refurbishments and renovations of the *Wailuku Public Library*.
- ☑ **\$72.9 million** for the design and construction of improvements and renovations at *Kahului Harbor*.
- ☑ **\$2 million** to acquire *Nā Wai 'Ehā watershed*, with additional support being sought from the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Grant Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Land Acquisition Program, along with the County of Maui.

Here are notable projects operating highlights from the House draft of the bill:

- ☑ **\$120 million** in state funds and **\$11.3 million** from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to fully restore the *Department of Education's* budget from the Governor's proposed reductions.
- ☑ **\$3.1 million** to fully restore the *HIV Prevention budget*.
- ☑ **\$742 million** from ARPA funds to repay the unemployment insurance loan principal and interest.
- ☑ **\$62 million** to fully restore the *University of Hawai'i system budget*.
- ☑ **\$1.8 million** from state budget and **\$1.3 million** from ARPA for additional funding for the *Hawai'i Promise Program*. *This program is important to help provide free in-state tuition for University of Hawai'i Community College students with financial needs. Due to the pandemic, a higher number of Hawai'i students are applying to this program.*

## Federal COVID-19 relief package assists Hawai'i

The United States Congress passed in early March and President Biden signed into law the 2021 American Rescue Plan. The latest round of federal stimulus provides vital relief to many who are struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlights include direct payments of \$1,400 to those making less than \$75,000 per year, and households making less than \$150,000. This \$1.9 trillion relief package will be the second largest emergency relief package in American history. Specifically, for Hawai'i, the package includes about \$6 billion in funding.

The bill includes \$60 billion for small businesses and non-profits with \$25 billion allocated to the Small Business Administration. \$3 billion in funding for economic assistance to be administered by the Department of Commerce, with 15 percent earmarked specifically for cities impacted by the collapse of tourism and hospitality. For Hawai'i, the rescue plan includes \$152 million in addition to the \$200 million that was received in previous funding for COVID-19 rental relief and assistance that is slated to be administered by each respective county.

The package also expands the Earned Income Tax Credit by raising the maximum credit for workers without children from roughly \$530 to roughly \$1,500, and the income cap for these adults to qualify from about \$16,000 to at least \$21,000. It also would expand the age range of eligible workers without children to include younger adults aged 19-24 who are not full-time students, as well as people aged 65 and over.

The rescue plan also contains a new provision to exempt \$10,200 of unemployment benefits received in 2020 from federal income taxes and only applies to individuals with incomes below \$150,000. The Hawai'i Legislature is still trying to understand if federal guidelines will allow Hawai'i to enact a similar exemption for state taxes. As a condition of accepting federal stimulus, a provision was added to not allow State or counties to reduce or waive any type of local taxes. Federal guidance on this provision's application is still pending.

More information on the federal stimulus can be found through U.S. Senator Brian Schatz's website: [www.schatz.senate.gov/coronavirus](http://www.schatz.senate.gov/coronavirus)

### Relief package highlights for Hawai'i

- **\$1.6 billion** for assistance to the State of Hawai'i.
- **\$30 million** for assistance to the County of Maui.
- **\$1.7 billion** of direct cash payment for Hawai'i residents.
  - An additional \$1,400 per dependent, including both children and non-child dependents.
- **\$575 million** for unemployment assistance for Hawai'i.
  - The extra \$300 unemployment benefits have been extended until September 6.
- **\$6 million** for electric and water utility assistance for Hawai'i.
- **\$9.2 million** for senior and disability support programs.
- **\$634 million** for education programs for Hawai'i.
  - \$78 million to address learning loss.
  - \$3.5 million for early childhood education.
  - \$98 million from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund to support Hawai'i's colleges and universities.
- **\$138 million** for child care and welfare programs for Hawai'i.
- **\$226 million for rent and mortgage relief for Hawai'i**
  - Household income cannot exceed 80 percent of the area median income, at least one household member must be at risk of homelessness or housing instability, and individuals would have to qualify for unemployment benefits or have experienced financial hardship (directly or indirectly) due to the pandemic.
  - \$50 million for a new Homeowner Assistance Program to help Hawai'i families who are behind on their mortgages or already in foreclosure due to the pandemic.
  - \$6.5 million in Native Hawaiian Housing Assistance.
- **Health Insurance**
  - Under the relief bill, the government will pay the entire COBRA premium from April 1 through Sept. 30.
- **SNAP Benefit**
  - An extension of 15 percent in monthly SNAP benefits and boosts WIC benefits and also supports other nutrition programs.

### Funds for Capital Improvement Projects

Governor David Ige announced the release of funding for the following projects appropriated by the Legislature in a joint effort by Rep. Hashimoto and Senator Keith-Agaran. Most CIP projects are paid for with borrowed bond funds and it must be a large scale renovation, repair, or new construction.



» **\$450,000** for Wailuku Elementary School for design and construction for parking lot improvements fronting the school.

» The construction contract has been awarded to the Arisumi Brothers, Inc. for **\$10.25 million** to build a new Waihe'e Elementary School administration office. The funding was released last year and appropriated by the Legislature.



### Hawaii Department of Education updates

The Hawaii State Department of Education Superintendent Christina Kishimoto announced that she will not be renewing her contract when it expires in July. Kishimoto joined the Department of Education in 2017 under a three-year contract with a \$240,000 annual salary which was extended by a year in early 2019. She is responsible for overseeing 257 DOE schools and a total staff of roughly 42,000 DOE employees.



#### Latest on graduation ceremonies

The Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) released guidelines to allow for limited, in-person school commencement and transition ceremonies that ensure the health and safety of students, staff and families.

HIDOE did announce the cancellation of all large, in-person social gatherings through June 1, 2021, including proms, banquets, May Day celebrations, and other school sanctioned social events with more than 20 attendees. For more information, go to [www.hawaiipublicschools.org](http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org)





## Kahului Civic Center & Wailuku State Office Building 3 project

Two construction projects are slated to be undertaken by the Hawaii Housing Finance & Development and the Department of Accounting and General Services as part of a collaborative effort to plan multi-use spaces for the Central Maui community.

The Wailuku State Office Building, in conjunction with the Kahului Civic Center will take the necessary steps to address the shortage of office space for state services, address Maui's affordable housing needs, create a vibrant mixed-use project, and promote transit-oriented development.

The Kahului Civic Center project will add 150-300 affordable housing units, offices for DAGS, the Community School for Adults, and other support space. The project site already includes the County of Maui's new Maui Bus Hub, which broke ground earlier this year. The Kahului Library will also be moving to this new center.

Through an agreement with the County of Maui, the Wailuku State Office Building is slated to be constructed on the parcel known as the "Old Wailuku Post Office site", currently being used as parking for the county. The new State Office Building will consist of 74,000 square feet of space for state services and associated parking. It is slated to be completed in 2028.

The HHFDC has created a dedicated website for updates and information on the project at:

<http://dbedt.hawaii.gov/hhfdc/kahului-civic-center-and-wailuku-state-office-bldg-3/>



Wailuku State Office Building 3 at the "Old Wailuku Post Office" site.



## Kuikahi Affordable Housing project

The Kuikahi Affordable Housing project is being proposed as a 204-unit development at the mauka end of Kuikahi drive in Wailuku. The \$66 million project will utilize 15 acres of land will comprise of single-family, duplex, multifamily, live-work and tiny home units.

The Kuikahi Affordable Housing project is organized by Doyle and Dwayne Betsill, and Alaula Builders LLC, a new Kahului-based development company. Their project named Kuikahi, is to create a new urban design development with a live-work element at the center of the neighborhood. Doyle Betsill, the president of Alaula Builders LLC, states that, "people can use this development for affordable housing, community service businesses, such as daycares or office spaces, and even affordable rental units to create income that would allow more people to qualify for homes."

The aim is to build diverse products, such as the roughly 450-square-foot tiny home geared toward empty nesters, single older people or a young person starting out.

Betsill estimates that the project is about two to three years from having homes available. The project is currently seeking cultural and historical information on their cultural impact assessment and must complete their environmental assessment. Approval from the Maui County Council is also needed.

## Notable Bills at the Legislature

At the start of March, the legislative session marked the halfway point. Senate and House bills crossed over to the opposite chamber for further consideration.



- ▶ **H.B. 1278 HD1, Act 1 2020** passed the Legislature and has been signed into law. This provides unemployment insurance relief to Hawai'i's businesses. It will temporarily reduce the unemployment insurance contribution rates paid by the employers through 2022. *Furthermore, this will expedite the state's economic recovery and protects employers from facing higher tax rates at a pivotal time.*
- ▶ **H.B.1376 HD2** seeks to move mandatory mediation for residential landlord-tenant disputes from after an eviction is filed to be a prerequisite to any court action. *This will allow many cases to be settled without court intervention. Provides funding for mediation services.*
- ▶ **H.B.775** will rename the Kahului Airport Access Road, "Mayor Elmer F. Cravalho Way". *This is a culmination of efforts to recognize the former Speaker of the House and Mayor of Maui.*



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*If you would like to be added to my email list,  
please email me, and I will gladly add you.*

 /rephashimoto  
 @reptroyhashimoto

## Dial (808) for local calls



The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has adopted 988 as a new three-digit number to be used nationwide to reach the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline starting July 16, 2022. All telecommunications carriers and VoIP service providers are required to take part in the initiative.

In order for 988 to work, all service providers must implement mandatory 10-digit local dialing. Therefore, starting **October 24, 2021** local calls, including those on the same island, will require that you dial area code 808 + telephone number.

Until **July 16, 2022** customers must continue to dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline. Beginning July 16, 2022 dialing "988" will automatically route your call to the Lifeline.

Be sure to check any websites, personal and business stationery, advertising materials, personal and business checks, contact information, personal or pet ID tags and other such items to ensure the area code is included.

## Maui County COVID-19 Vaccination update

The State Department of Health started to vaccinate those categorized in 1c on March 15, in accordance with their COVID-19 plan. Phase 1c includes adults 65 to 69, persons with high-risk medical conditions and essential workers not included in 1a or 1b. Adults who qualify under phase 1a and 1b are still eligible for the vaccination.

Maui Health systems has partnered with DOH to be the main Maui location. If you would like to make an appointment with Maui Health systems go to:

**[www.mauihealth.org/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/](http://www.mauihealth.org/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/)**.

Maui Health systems does not accept requests for vaccines via e-mail or through their contact us form. If you are a kupuna 70 and over and do not have a computer, call (808) 242-2273 and leave your name, DOB, and phone number and they will call you back.

To get the latest information, which is continually changing, regarding eligibility, please go to: **<https://hawaiiicovid19.com/vaccination-registration/>**.

### ***Other vaccine locations in Central Maui***

Vaccines are also offered at other locations depending on availability and eligibility. Please be sure to check each facility before showing up in-person.

- **Kaiser Permanente, Maui Lani Medical Office**, 55 Maui Lani Parkway, Wailuku (808) 243-6000
- **Maui Medical Group**, 2180 Main St., Wailuku • (808) 242-6464
- **Malama I Ke Ola Health Center**, 1881 Nani St, Wailuku • (808) 871-7772
- **Hui No Ke Ola Pono**, 95 Mahalani St # 21, Wailuku • (808) 244-4647
- **Minit Medical**, 270 Dairy Rd #239, Kahului • (808) 667-6161
- **CVS/Longs Drugs Pharmacy-Kahului**, 70 E Kaahumanu Ave, Kahului • (808) 877-0068
- **Safeway Pharmacy-Wailuku**, 58 Maui Lani Pkwy Suite 5000, Wailuku • (808) 243-3522
- **Safeway Pharmacy-Kahului**, 1090 Ho'okele St, Kahului • (808) 359-2970
- **Maui Clinic Pharmacy**, 53 S Puunene Ave #120, Kahului • (808) 877-6222
- **Mobile Doctor**, (888) 663-6631
- **University of Hawaii Maui Campus Health Center**, 310 Kaahumanu Ave, Kahului • (808) 984-8260
- **Mauliola Pharmacy**, 95 Mahalani Street, Room 10, Wailuku • (808) 446-3348