



CAPITOL UPDATE

Representative Lisa Kitagawa



Aloha,

I know that the past few months have been challenging and that we are in unprecedented times due to COVID-19. I recognize that it may be difficult to navigate between the State, and City and County orders because they change so frequently. Although we are unsure of what the summer months will bring, I do know that we will get through it together, as a community.

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES INSIDE
For information about specific state programs (unemployment, food assistance, other resources), see inside.

In early May, Governor Ige issued a "Safer at Home" order, which focuses on a gradual reopening of our economy and State. As this letter is going to print, essential and designated businesses are continuing or starting to reopen. Shopping malls are reopening with safety guidelines and discussions are taking place to figure out how to reopen dine-in restaurants. This gradual reopening of our economy will help to reduce unemployment rates and will provide for much needed economic activity in our State.

However, we must not let our guard down and must continue to be vigilant. We are in a new "normal", which includes practicing social distancing, wearing masks or a face covering in public, and refraining from gathering in groups. We must also make sure that we continue to watch out for our most vulnerable community members, who at any point, may be adversely affected by this virus. The harsh reality is that it only takes one person to unknowingly spread COVID-19 to others. While the curve has flattened, we are still experiencing positive cases. The more we reopen our economy and State, the more aware and on guard we must be.

I will continue to keep you updated as new information becomes available. Please subscribe to my emails for the most up-to-date information. To subscribe, please email: repkitagawa@capitol.hawaii.gov. Thank you for continuing to support each other during these trying times. We are stronger together.

Mahalo,

Lisa

REDEPLOYING TO ADDRESS OUR UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS

It has become painfully clear that Hawaii experienced a massive unemployment crisis triggered by the COVID-19 virus beginning in mid March of this year. The number of unemployment filings skyrocketed from a pre-COVID-19 volume of 20,000 claims to over 232,000 in three and a half weeks. This unprecedented spike has never occurred in any Hawaii recession. Like every other state in the Nation, Hawaii struggled to intake and process such exponential growth in unemployment claims. Those struggles led to many frustrated and distressed people who found themselves unemployed and in need of money. *Desperate times call for desperate measures. Sometimes, the biggest problems can only be fixed by rolling up one's sleeves and personally getting in the trenches to fix the problem. That is exactly what the House of Representatives did in taking the lead to build the unemployment claims and call center operation at the Convention Center.*

Over the past month, I have helped the unemployment claims and call center. This operation has involved hundreds of volunteers from a collaboration of the Legislature, unions, including HGEA, HSTA, and UHPA, and the Executive Branch. The Department of Labor trained 687 volunteers to help address the state's backlogged unemployment claims—an unprecedented partnership of such magnitude stood up literally over one weekend. This partnership exponentially expanded the state's capacity to process claims, thereby helping to pay out claimants and tackle this crisis.

Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program (PUA)

Pua.hawaii.gov

What is it? Coverage created by Congress to extend unemployment benefits to workers previously not covered by the unemployment system. Because this is a new federal mandate, no state had the underlying infrastructure to pay workers who were originally not covered and eligible for unemployment.

Who is eligible for PUA? People who:
1) are self-employed, including gig workers, freelancers, and independent contractors;
2) are seeking part-time employment; 3) have an insufficient work history to qualify for benefits; 4) have exhausted all rights to regular or extended benefits under state or federal law or to Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC); 5) have been laid off from churches and religious institutions and are not eligible for benefits under state law; or 6) are otherwise not qualified for regular or extended benefits or Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC)

Why haven't I received my benefits? No infrastructure previously existed to pay out PUA benefits; the Department of Taxation is building the infrastructure to cross-reference your tax submissions to assess eligibility.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

Labor.hawaii.gov

If I return to work, can I still collect UI?

You can retroactively collect the unemployment benefit for the weeks you were not working, even if you have returned to work. You may still be eligible for UI if you are working reduced hours that earn less than your weekly benefit amount.

If I am called back to work, but don't want to return because of COVID-19 or other issues, can I refuse?

If you refuse work from your employer, for whatever reason, you will become ineligible for UI benefits.

Who do I contact to address issues with my claim?

You can call the UI Call Center at (833) 901-2275 to speak to someone about your claim, your questions, or to reset your password. An additional 120 phone lines have been added to the call center to help.

I'm having trouble getting into the system.

Recently, the Department created a duplicate system that does not exist on the state mainframe with most other major governmental functions. This has allowed more capacity in the system and much greater rates of people accessing the UI system.



I have volunteered on an almost daily basis for the past month —personally processing thousands of unemployment claims. The operation recently added hundreds of phones to be able to better address the many calls and provide better and more detailed answers and help.

Since the project began, nearly 70% of claimants have either been paid out or received a decision, helping to reduce the 232,000 backlogged claims. Although progress has been made, much work remains to be done.



Common Unemployment Issues Experienced

Access: Claim Filing or Weekly Certification Issues

- Should be better; duplicate system has been created, providing more access
- Late at night and weekends tend to have more bandwidth and capacity for system access

Certification Issues

- You will need to certify for all the weeks you are claiming unemployment
- If you do not certify, the system will not pay out your benefit; it is a claimant's responsibility to verify that they were not working and should be eligible for UI

Claim Status Says "Pending"

This could mean any number of potential scenarios precluding your claim from being paid out or being denied. Here are some frequent scenarios that delay processing of a UI claim that can be remedied by a claimant or an employer:

- You made a mistake typing in your name and/or social security number (the entire system relies on accuracy of these two critical components)
- You have not done your weekly certifications
- Your employer has not submitted your earnings for you in the base period

Regular Issues that delay processing of a UI claim because it requires a Claims Examiner to examine the issue between the employer and employee:

- **Voluntary Leave** – if you voluntarily left your current or a previous job in the eligibility period
- **Misconduct/Disciplinary Issue** – your previous or current employer has flagged you as having a misconduct or disciplinary issue (even if it is from a previous employer) that has yet to be reviewed or closed out
- **Did Not Show Up for Work** – an employer offered you work, but you chose not to show up to work
- **Pension Income from a Previous Job** – this may affect your benefit amount

FOOD RESOURCES



Food Distribution Locations

Please see the Hawaii Food Bank website for locations in our community (click on the "Emergency Food Assistance" tab):

<http://www.hawaiifoodbank.org/>

Currently, the KEY Project (on June 2 and 16) and Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center (at Windward Mall, every Friday) provides large scale food distribution in our community.

Please see the Hawaii Food Bank website for other locations across the island.

Drive-Thru Free Lunch at KEY Project

47-200 Waihee Rd.
239-5777

11:30am
Monday-Friday



Rep Kitagawa volunteering at the KEY Project food distribution.



FREE KEIKI MEALS (for children 18 years or younger)

The Department of Education locations in our community providing free breakfast (7:30am – 8:00am) and lunch (11:30am – 12:00pm) include: **Ben Parker Elementary, Heeia Elementary, Kahaluu Elementary, King Intermediate.** Meals will be available through mid-July. Locations may change.

For updates, visit: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/Emergencies/2020GrabandGo.pdf>

Additional keiki meals are available at:

Calvary Preschool (45-435 Aumoku Street): 10:00am – 11:30am

Puohala Elementary (through June 30): 11:30am – 12:30pm

Windward Nazarene Academy (45-232 Puaae Road, through summer): 11:30am – 12:30pm

(Thank you to the community partnership of: Kamaaina Kids, Windward Nazarene Academy, YMCA of Honolulu, Aloha Harvest, Kapiolani Community College, Lanakila Pacific, Hawaii Appleseed, and Hawaii Child Nutrition Programs)

FOOD PANTRIES

There are numerous food pantry locations in our community. For additional locations, visit the Hawaii Food Bank website: <http://www.hawaiifoodbank.org/>

Organization	Location	Phone	Day, Time
KEY Project	47-200 Waihee Road	239-5777	Mon-Fri, 9:00am—3:00pm
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church	48-422 Kamehameha Hwy	239-9269	4th Tues, 12:00pm—1:00pm
Saint Mark Lutheran Church	45-725 Kamehameha Hwy	247-4565	Sat, 8:00am—10:00am
Saint Ann Project Share	46-129 Haiku Road	247-3092 x128	Mon, Wed, Fri, 1:00pm
The Salvation Army	45-175 Waikalua Road	235-1408	Tues, 9:00am—12:00pm
Windward Baptist Church	47-528 A Kamehameha Hwy	239-6917	Mon-Fri, 12:00pm—1:00pm



KUPUNA RESOURCES

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COVID-19 CHANGES

<p>PRESCRIPTIONS & PHARMACIES</p>	<p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, a senior on Medicare can get up to 90 days of a prescription if that is what their doctor prescribed. Medicare drug plans will also allow beneficiaries to fill prescriptions early for refills up to 90 days, depending on the prescription. In the past, Medicare drug plans only let beneficiaries receive a 30-day supply of their prescription.</p> <p><i>Check with your pharmacy to see if delivery is available. CVS and Walgreens are offering delivery for certain prescriptions.</i></p>
<p>TELEHEALTH</p>	<p>Medicare now pays for office, hospital, and other visits provided via telehealth <u>in all areas</u> of the country and in <u>patients' homes</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care providers may <u>reduce or waive cost-sharing</u> for telehealth visits. • Providers can now use telehealth with beneficiaries who have <u>audio phones only</u>. • Health care providers can use everyday communications technologies, such as FaceTime or Skype, to provide telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic.
<p>HOME HEALTH</p>	<p>The CARES Act permanently allows physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and clinical nurse specialists to order home health services for beneficiaries, which will reduce delays and increase beneficiary access to care in their homes.</p>



KEIKI CARDS FOR OUR KUPUNA

What started out as an art project with my children, turned into an opportunity to share aloha with our Kaneohe kupuna in senior residence facilities. Due to

COVID-19, family and friends have been unable to visit their loved ones in these facilities. Community members and children of my friends helped to create cards of aloha for our kupuna. In May, we mailed over 400 keiki cards to our community's senior residence facilities. We plan to deliver additional keiki cards in June to these locations. If you have keiki that would like to participate and make cards, please contact my office for more information. If you know of a kupuna in our community who may appreciate receiving a keiki card, please contact my office as well. This small gesture of aloha makes a positive difference and helps to brighten someone's day.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR KUPUNA

City & County Elderly Affairs Division
Services Assessment
 808-768-7700
elderlyaffairs.com

AARP Community Services
aarpcommunityconnections.org

Catholic Charities Phone-A-Friend
 527-4777
catholiccharitieshawaii.org

AARP Neighbors Helping Neighbors
 1-888-281-0145
Aarpcommunityconnections.org/friendly-voices/



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE & HOUSING

<p>SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)</p>	<p>The SNAP program provides crucial food and nutritional support to qualifying low-income and needy households, and those making the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency. The federal government has changed the qualification requirements so more families may be eligible. To apply, visit the website: https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/bessd/1961-2/ or contact 855-643-1643 if you have questions.</p>
<p>TEMPORARY AID TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)</p>	<p>TANF provides monthly cash benefits to families for food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials. To apply for TANF benefits, call the Public Assistance Information Line at 855-643-1643.</p>
<p>MORTGAGE/ RENT</p>	<p>If you are a homeowner or renter and the property currently has a government guaranteed mortgage or is supported by the federal government, you are eligible for assistance. Homeowners with a government guaranteed mortgage who are worried about being able to afford future mortgage payments may seek a loan forbearance, a temporary pause in loan payments, for up to 12 months. If you are renting from an owner who has a federally-backed mortgage or federally-supported multi-family property, the CARES Act provides for a moratorium on evictions from March 27, 2020, through July 25, 2020.</p> <p>Homeowners or renters seeking information on whether they are covered by CARES Act assistance programs should visit legallaidhawaii.org or contact a HUD approved housing counselor. You can find the nearest housing counselor on consumerfinance.gov or by calling (800) 569-4287.</p>



United Way – Assistance with food, housing, childcare or essential services

Dial 2-1-1

211.org

COUNSELING & MENTAL HEALTH

<p>Disaster Distress Hotline</p>	<p>1-800-985-5990</p>	<p>24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. Toll-free, multilingual, and confidential.</p>
<p>Windward Community Mental Health Center</p>	<p>808-233-3775</p>	<p>For community based mental health services and referrals for mental health assistance.</p>

Representative Scot Matayoshi and I have partnered with the Hawaii Farm Bureau to bring the Farm to Car program to Windward Mall. This program supports our hardworking local farmers, while also providing fresh, delicious and nutritious food to consumers in a safe and convenient manner. The Farm to Car Windward program started in April and will run through the end of June. In order to purchase items, individuals must have a customer account, which can be created at www.hfbf.org/farm-to-car.



Once you have an account, individuals will be able to purchase produce boxes and other items from the online store. The online store opens on Thursdays at 2 pm for next Thursday afternoon pick up at Windward Mall fronting the former Sears location on the ground floor.



Representative Kitagawa volunteering at Farm to Car Windward.

Congratulations 2020 Graduates!

Although there is disappointment surrounding our traditional graduation ceremonies this year, there is also much joy in celebrating the many accomplishments of our students. It has been wonderful to see our community pull together to honor and recognize our graduating students. Through all of the current challenges, students, parents and family members have come together to celebrate in many different ways and we are stronger as a community because of it.



Congratulations to all of our graduating students. You have worked hard, persevered and succeeded, and should be proud of yourselves. I wish all of you the best in your future endeavors.

REPRESENTATIVE LISA KITAGAWA SCHOLARSHIP



As a former higher education administrator and someone who attended college through the generous scholarships given by others, I have always wanted to give back and help other Castle High School students further their education.

This year, I was able to award Aisha Yamamoto with the second annual Representative Lisa Kitagawa Scholarship. Aisha is an outstanding student, who served as Castle High School's class president for four consecutive years, and volunteers with numerous campus and community organizations. She excels academically and was one of Castle's valedictorians. She will be attending the University of Southern California and majoring in biomedical engineering.

Congratulations Aisha – you make our hometown of Kaneohe proud!

State Representative

LISA
KITAGAWA



Proudly Serving Kāne'ohe to Waiāhole

415 S. Beretania St., Rm 310
Honolulu, HI 96813

COVID-19 & COMMUNITY INFO INSIDE

As of May 18, 2020

**Mahalo to all of our essential
workers, healthcare workers,
and first responders!**

For more info on the
COVID-19 virus, email:
repkitagawa@capitol.hawaii.gov
or visit:
hawaii-covid19.com

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19

In May, the Legislature reconvened to focus on stabilizing the state budget and other budget-related bills in anticipation of a \$1 billion shortfall in state revenues. A decrease in tourism and economic activity due to COVID-19 and the stay-at-home orders have created a sharp decline in general excise tax revenue. The Legislature returned to session to ensure availability of state funding, such as the use of rainy day funds, and to avoid drastic cuts and furloughs. The Legislature also focused on allocating federal funds provided through the CARES Act to address our State's COVID-19 response efforts. Federal funding will cover disease outbreak and control support, such as contract tracing, thermal screenings at airports, IT upgrades for unemployment and SNAP benefit processing, and economic recovery efforts, to name a few. The Legislature plans to reconvene again in June to address additional budget issues, as well as other legislative measures.

WindwardMenu.com was created to help our community stay up-to-date on local restaurants that were open and operating during COVID-19, as well as resources for our community. We have also created a more comprehensive website, www.RepKitagawa.com, that provides COVID-19 information, as well as other community-related information and updates. E-communications can be the fastest way to disseminate rapidly-changing information. Please visit the website and/or subscribe to our e-newsletter by emailing us to add you at repkitagawa@capitol.hawaii.gov.



New www.RepKitagawa.com with Community and COVID-19 Resources