

**PROTECT  
PUBLIC HEALTH**

**REVIVE  
THE ECONOMY**

**STRENGTHEN  
OUR COMMUNITY**

## **CAPITOL CONNECTION**

**JUNE 2021**

### **From the governor: Celebrating wins on and off the court**

**H**ow do we prepare for the future when we're still navigating the pandemic? We might take a page out of the UH men's volleyball team playbook as 2021 NCAA champions. We stay the course, battle together and meet the challenges as a community. Talk with Governor Ige and those trying to build a more resilient future for the state, and you start to see the value of playing the long game — whether it's mask mandates or Hawai'i 2.0 — and how we shape our lives post-pandemic.

**Q. What has changed in the current statewide mask mandates?**

A. Effective immediately, people will not be required to wear a mask while outside. However, mask wearing is highly recommended in large crowds outdoors. The indoor mask mandate remains unchanged until more in our community get vaccinated. We do recognize it may be safe for fully vaccinated individuals to go without a mask, but it's impossible to know who's vaccinated and who isn't.



**WARRIOR PRIDE:** Governor and Mrs. Ige honored the NCAA champion UH men's volleyball team. See story on Page 3.

**Q. What should we know about Hawai'i's vaccination efforts to reach more people?**

A. Our state has one of the highest vaccination rates in the nation, but we still have more work to do. We know the vaccines are safe and effective. We're making a big community push in June with promotional events at vaccination sites as well as mobile pods. Now that the Pfizer vaccine is approved for 12- to 15-year-olds, we're encouraging students and the rest of their families to get their shots. The faster we can get people vaccinated, the sooner we can get everyone back to work, school and our normal activities.

**Q. Are we close to having a vaccine exception for trans-Pacific travel?**

A. The next phase we're working on is exceptions for Hawai'i trans-Pacific travelers. We want to see if CommonPass and CLEAR can verify vaccine exceptions for those vaccinated in Hawai'i. If we can automate that, then we'll see if they can access records in other states for travelers. I'm targeting the **4th of July** to allow trans-Pacific travel for mainland-vaccinated people without the need to be tested.

**Q. What's the most challenging part of the bill review process?**

A. As governor, I have only three options: sign the bill into law, veto it or let it become law without my signature. I take public comments and the views of state agencies into account and ask, "Is it the right thing to do for the people of Hawai'i?" The measures I veto may have some merit but propose something that is in error legally or violates the state constitution or may just not be good policy. The bills that become law without my signature might involve concerns I have with the process, or I might disagree with parts of the measure, but they're not so egregious that I would veto the whole bill. (The governor's deadline to announce his veto list is June 21.) Members of the public can submit comments on bills at <https://governor.hawaii.gov/contact-us/comments-on-legislation/>.

**Q. What's your overall assessment of the legislative session in terms of your priorities?**

A. We were able to make progress in some of the most critical areas, such as affordable housing, the environment and education. The American Rescue Plan helped tremendously in avoiding furloughs and layoffs of public employees. We also need to make government smaller as we look to the future. I have real concerns about the legislature taking away the dedicated funding for the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and for the counties. Such a significant change in policy — in the closing days of the session — didn't leave much time for the public to understand the changes and to comment.

# In-person learning for DOE and vaccinated UH students

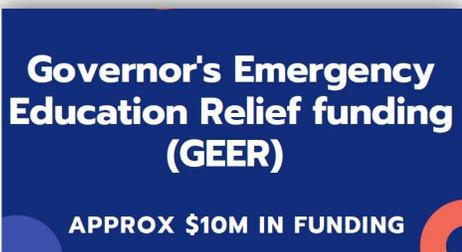
**P**ublic K-12 schools will return to full in-person learning starting Aug. 3 as more students get vaccinated and ongoing safety practices are in place, said outgoing Department of Education Superintendent Christina Kishimoto. This includes activities such as clubs, bands and athletics. Governor Ige also approved the request from Mayor Rick Blangiardi to allow spectators for outdoor sports at O'ahu public parks. Spectators must follow the state's current mask guidelines and may gather in groups under 10 people, but no post-game potlucks are allowed.



UH students can return to campus in the fall if vaccinated.

**For public higher education**, the 10-campus University of Hawai'i system has announced it will require students to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to attend in-person classes for the fall. The requirement will take effect when at least one of the three vaccines currently authorized for emergency use has received full approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which could happen this summer. Unvaccinated students may enroll in online courses, and students will also be able to request exemptions for health or religious reasons. The university will also be initiating formal discussions with the three unions that represent UH employees about possibly requiring COVID-19 vaccinations, said UH President David Lassner. For more information, view the UH FAQs at <https://www.hawaii.edu/covid19/vaccinate/requirement-students-faqs/>.

## GEER funds: Innovating to improve education statewide



**F**or students across the state, how do we translate lessons learned from the pandemic into real innovation in education? Part of the answer could be the nearly \$10 million Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund to provide support for a wide range of projects — from an online teacher academy and a transition-to-college summer program for students to innovation grants and a community of support for families. The goal is to build on the Ige administration's 2017 Blueprint for Public Education and encourage innovation to both respond to the pandemic and set a course for educational change and reform.

The plan is based on the three tenets of relief, resilience and reinvention as part of the state's overall plan for long-term recovery. "The timing and purpose of the GEER funds is designed to look toward how we can improve education for students, based on the emerging lessons of the pandemic," said the governor. The plan elements include:

- **Innovation grants** - Grants of from \$100,000 to \$500,000 are available to public, private and charter schools as well as other educational entities and non-profits. Initiatives may include creating digital equity, providing support for families, and distance learning. The deadline for applications is **June 4, 2021** for implementation in the coming school year. Grant recipients will share their projects at an **Education Summit in summer 2022**. Visit <https://governor.hawaii.gov/> and click on the "education" tab.
- **Hawaii Online Portal for Education (HOPE)**, a distance learning teacher academy - During the summers of 2021 and 2022, cohorts of local teachers will work on developing Hawai'i-focused online curriculum resources available to all educators in the state (coordinated through the University of Hawai'i). For details, go to <https://governor.hawaii.gov/>, "education" tab.
- **Next Steps to Your Future** – UH is offering this free transition-to-college program for public high school juniors and seniors whose college career plans were impacted by the pandemic in 2020-2021. For details, go to <https://nextsteps.hawaii.edu>.

## New Emergency Broadband Benefit program to expand access

**A** new federal program to help low-income households pay for internet service is available now. Under the **Emergency Broadband Benefit Program** established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), eligible households can receive up to \$50 a month to pay for broadband service. Qualifying lessees on Hawaiian Home Lands may apply for a benefit of up to \$75 per month. Eligible households may also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 toward the purchase of a laptop, desktop computer or tablet. "About 200,000 households could be eligible for this benefit," said Governor Ige. "The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the way we live, work and learn. Everyone needs broadband access and internet connectivity, or they'll be left behind."



**Hawai'i households are eligible to apply for the program** if one member of the household: 1) Qualifies for the FCC Lifeline program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); 2) Received benefits under the "free and reduced" school breakfast or lunch program; or 3) Filed for unemployment or PUA or experienced a loss of hours. Hawai'i households can apply in three ways: 1) Contact an internet service provider directly; 2) Apply at <https://www.getemergencybroadband.org/>; or 3) Call 833-511-0311 for a mail-in application and send with proof of eligibility to Emergency Broadband Support, P.O. Box 7081 London, KY 40742.

# Workforce resiliency: a ‘Be Ready for Anything’ future

**T**he big picture: **What is Hawai‘i 2.0?** “It’s seeing the future and finding ways to keep the state, our workforce and businesses in the forefront,” said Governor Ige. “The lesson of the pandemic is that the digital economy is here to stay, and every business and organization will need to embrace it. We’re looking to help people and organizations make that transformation. The more digital skills you acquire, the more opportunities you’ll have.” The Ige administration and public-private sector partners have launched several initiatives to prepare Hawai‘i’s people for a digital future by improving connectivity and providing skill training. This **“Ready for Anything” mindset** also reflects the need to diversify the state’s economy, as well as ourselves, with skills adaptable to whatever the future throws at us, including new tech developments and economic shocks like the pandemic.

**Digital literacy and job training 2.0 – The Workforce Development Council (WDC)**, under the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, has a plan to build resiliency into Hawai‘i’s people and programs. It’s part of **Hawai‘i’s Remote Work Pilot Program** to train and connect local residents to future jobs in tech and other sectors. Working with the counties, WDC and the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) have already launched pilot projects through **Instant Teams** and **FlexJobs** to train and place Hawai‘i residents in remote work positions as well as **Amazon Web Services**. **But what if you’re still at the lowest level of tech skills?** How do you take the first step to a different career? And what kinds of skills will you need? To answer those questions, WDC surveyed its own board members and employers for their best forecast. The result is **WDC’s Workforce Resiliency Initiative**, based on the skills nearly 150 stakeholders said they need in future workers. The two core areas include **basic digital literacy** and **professional “soft skills”** such as problem solving, communication and collaboration that can be assets in any job sector.

**FREE CLASSES FOR BASIC SKILLS, JOB TRAINING** - To give any Hawai‘i resident 18 and older a first shot at the future, free, in-person digital literacy classes are being offered statewide through June 30 at UH community colleges and several public libraries. The single, three-hour classes are designed to help those with little to no computer skills and provide access to further online learning. To register at a UH community college near you, call 235-7334 or visit [www.digitalreadyhawaii.org](http://www.digitalreadyhawaii.org). “These free digital literacy classes are part of the state’s commitment to digital equity and the WDC’s drive to position Hawai‘i as a place and people with the highest digital literacy in the world,” said project manager Ka‘ala Souza. He likens it to the 1800s when Hawai‘i’s people had one of the highest literacy rates in the world. “Now we’re saying the same kind of importance applies to digital literacy. If you’re digitally literate, you have options,” said Souza.

He said a key piece of the Hawai‘i 2.0, “ready for anything” mindset also includes providing local residents with **free job training opportunities**. As of June 1, WDC has a contract with **LinkedIn Learning** to provide nearly 3,000 licenses for free access to its online platform and a similar arrangement is planned for **Coursera**. “The world is in a different place, and the thing that will help us to be resilient and ready for anything is a foundation and framework of lifelong learning,” said Souza. Visit [www.digitalreadyhawaii.org](http://www.digitalreadyhawaii.org) for details.

## Warriors give much-needed shot in the arm to Hawai‘i



**N**o doubt about it — the UH men’s volleyball team boosted the spirits of the whole state when it won the 2021 NCAA championship last month. Governor Ige and First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige hosted the team, coaches and staff when he declared May 12, 2021 as **“Rainbow Warrior Day” in Hawai‘i**. “This has been a difficult time for all of us, but being able to share in the joy of watching our team represent the state so well is truly inspirational,” said the governor. “Congratulations to all of the team members, coaches and staff for representing Hawai‘i so well and showing the world that the Rainbow Warriors are a force to be reckoned with.”

Mrs. Ige echoed those sentiments and noted that the proclamation signing was the first public event at the historic home of Queen Lili‘uokalani since the pandemic began. She and **head coach Charlie Wade** also extended condolences to the family of **UH football great Colt Brennan**, 37, who had passed away suddenly in California days earlier. “Those of us in athletics really strive to bring pride and joy to our community. It’s something we take seriously,” he said. “It’s been a hard year for everyone, so for us to be able to break that depression and provide a source of pride and joy — that to me is really gratifying and something I’ll remember for a long time.” **Team captain Colton Cowell** added, “This program produces high-caliber men, not just high-caliber student athletes. As a group we feel a profound sense of gratitude to the community and the state of Hawai‘i. We’ll be eternally grateful.”



# Opening the doors to summer reading, historic tours

Suppose a community joined hands to send free books to its youngest keiki and provided activities for the whole family. Then a friendly neighborhood library offered more free rewards and even a chance to win airline tickets, just for reading. That's the link between the **First Lady's 'Ohana Readers project** and the state public libraries' **Summer Reading Challenge**. "These are first steps children can take in their journey to love reading," said First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige. "We hope 'Ohana Readers leads them to getting their library cards and a lifelong love of books."



Mrs. Ige, as a former educator, knows the power of the written word and the importance of early learning to open new worlds to children. The 'Ohana Readers project, launched in fall 2019, so far has enrolled about 74 percent of Moloka'i's children age 4-and-a-half and younger and 60 percent of Lana'i's keiki in the same age range. A similar program has expanded to Kekaha and Waimea, Kaua'i. The project enrolls families in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they're ready to begin kindergarten, no matter their family's income. "We're so pleased with the success of the programs so far," said Mrs. Ige. "We're encouraging more families to sign up."



The Hawai'i State Public Library System's **Summer Reading Challenge**, which runs June 1 - July 31, is sponsored by Hawai'i's Friends of the Library, Pizza Hut and McDonald's. For every 100 minutes read, participants of all ages can enter a drawing for four round-trip tickets from Alaska Airlines. The program is also partnering with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to offer online video lessons and crafts to children each week. To sign up, go to <https://www.librarieshawaii.org/summerreading/>. "Our libraries are playing bigger roles in the community and have been a lifeline to people during the pandemic with their virtual services," she said.

Also, just in time for summer, **historic Washington Place** is now open for **in-person, public tours** (four people per tour) every Thursday at 10 am. Go to the new website at <https://washingtonplace.hawaii.gov/tours-and-gardens/> to learn about this home of Queen Lili'uokalani and how to register for a tour. Larger groups are considered for alternate days or times for touring.

## Special license plates to support Polynesian voyaging

Although we can't all be on board the Polynesian Voyaging Society's canoe for its next voyage, we can still show our support on the road. Special license plates to help support the Polynesian Voyaging Society's mission will be available later this summer. Governor Ige signed legislation last month authorizing the issuance of the specialty license plate for \$25 in late August.



"The Worldwide Voyage helped us understand the reality of climate change and why it makes sense for Hawai'i to lead in creating bold goals for clean energy," the governor said. "We should be proud that Hōkūle'a has become a global symbol of how traditional indigenous practices can ignite a common kuleana to care for Island Earth." The Hōkūle'a began its six-year Mālama Honua worldwide voyage in 2014. The crews visited more than 150 ports in 18 nations to highlight the effects of climate change. **PVS president Nainoa Thompson** thanked the governor, Sen. Lorraine Inouye and Rep. Cedric Gates for their support of the special license plate and helping to raise awareness of the PVS mission. He said the next voyage — the **Moananuiākea Circumnavigation of the Pacific** expected to launch May 1, 2022 — is risky, but added, "The higher risk is not to go, to stay home and do nothing when the world is in such trauma. The license plate is a symbol for the crew that Hawai'i is with them."



Nainoa Thompson, Sen. Inouye, Gov. Ige, Rep. Gates and PVS license plate.



## COVID-19 vaccination campaign set for June

The Hawai'i Department of Health is planning a major campaign this month to encourage people to get their COVID-19 vaccinations. **#Higotvaccinated** activities will include promotional events and other incentives for vaccinated residents. The goal is to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible, so we can resume the lives we remember and protect the people we love.

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