

# DON'T INFECT, PLEASE PROTECT.

## CAPITOL CONNECTION

May 2020

### Governor extends quarantines, begins next phase for the state

*“The mayors and I believe that florists are one of the businesses that could operate in a way that protects customers and employees. They and others are included in the first phase of designated businesses allowed to reopen as we enter this next phase of COVID-19 and continue to remain vigilant.”* — Gov. David Ige

**W**ith the avalanche of COVID-19 news, how do we make sense of it all? What resources are there to help? And what is the outlook for a “new normal”? This issue of Capitol Connection has gathered some of the most important links and answers for quick reference — along with a few bright spots to give us all some hope. (For details, go to the [governor’s website](#), Honolulu Star-Advertiser’s [Covid-19 Care Conversation](#), and the [Hawai’i COVID-19 site](#) for the latest updates.

**Q. What has inspired you most about the community response to the pandemic?**

**A.** I know people really care about our community — **that’s the Hawai’i way**. What has been so impressive — even with all the stress — is how people have complied with the restrictions. All this is making a huge difference to keep our infection rate so low, especially compared to other states. We want to keep it that way.

**Q. Why are the current mandates important and what will a phased reopening look like?**

**A.** We know people want to return to work and life as they knew it, but the reality is COVID-19 has changed every aspect of our lives. **We have to make sure we’re keeping people safe, or we’ll see a spike in cases.** We’re extending the stay-at-home order and 14-day quarantines for travelers, but we’re working with the mayors on a **phased reopening of businesses under certain conditions to minimize direct contact and risk of infection.** Statewide, we’ll also need more testing, surveillance and contact tracing. **Our economic recovery group, led by Alan Oshima,** will be offering general guidelines, sector by sector, in collaboration with the counties.

**Q. What are some of the biggest challenges to reopening the state to tourism?**

Kevin McCoy

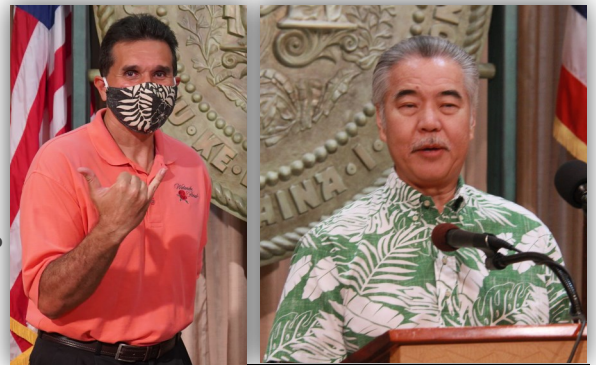
**A. The big question is how do we balance restarting tourism to help our economy with community health and public safety?** We’ve added improved measures for screening, monitoring and enforcement, but for the future we’ll need to reinvent the hospitality industry in a more sustainable way and determine how we’ll promote Hawai’i as a safe and healthy place to visit. That means visitors need to share in the responsibility for keeping us all safe, and hotels and other accommodations need to be partners in this to monitor visitors.

**Q. What is the outlook for making up what is estimated to be a \$1.5 billion state budget shortfall?**

**A.** Governors across the nation — both Democrats and Republicans — have told the president and Congress **our number one priority is federal help for the states for current budget issues.** We’ll have a better idea on May 10 what the tax revenue picture will look like for Hawai’i. We’re going to explore every option, including cost controls and using other reserve funds. Many state employees are delivering critical services, and salary reductions or furloughs for state workers will be a last resort.

**Q. On a personal level, what has worried you the most?**

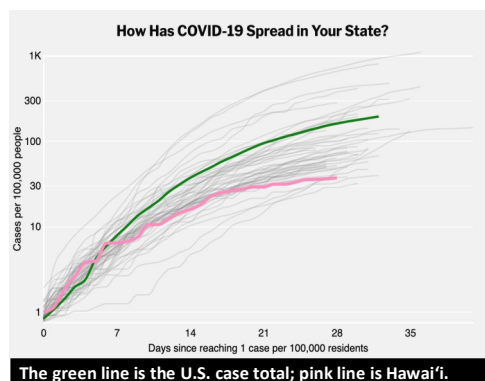
**A. As parents, Dawn and I worry about our children on the mainland who are near hot spots.** One of our daughters, a nurse in Washington state, had her first potential COVID-19 patient a few weeks ago in a dialysis clinic. She was very concerned about having access to PPE (personal protective equipment). **I just want people to keep taking this deadly virus seriously and stay safe.**



Monty Pereira, sales and marketing director at Watanabe Floral, said to the governor, “I want to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of all the flower shops and farms in Hawai’i, especially the mom and pop shops. We know that flowers can have a positive health impact on the elderly and everybody’s mental health.”

# First, the good news: Keep bending the curve, Hawai'i

**H**awai'i continues to rank as one of the best-performing states in the country in dealing with COVID-19. That's according to recent reports and data from [Johns Hopkins University](#), which shows Hawai'i is "flattening the curve" with a rate of coronavirus cases per capita far below the national rate. "Our travel quarantines, early testing, stay-at-home orders, closing all but essential businesses, and mandating masks and physical distancing have all made a huge difference in keeping everyone safe," said the governor. Department of Health director Bruce Anderson added, "We have that extraordinary protection right now, but we can't continue it forever. When we do open for travel, the disease can be introduced again, and we need to be ready to respond quickly."



National data also shows that Hawai'i tests for coronavirus at a considerably higher rate than most states, according to a Vox article charting the course of the pandemic. But Tim Brown, a senior fellow at the East-West Center with expertise in infectious disease, said before the state can lift the state shutdown, it must have the capacity to more rapidly test suspected cases, quickly trace their contacts and quarantine people as needed. He said the state also needs "data to inform triggers for reimposing lockdown should the epidemic surge."

## Getting help for the unemployed: the urgency is now

**T**he Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) is working as fast as it can, given its antiquated system, to handle the flood of unemployment claims. In February, DLIR received about 700 claims per week; recently in one day the department received some 25,000 filings. Claims are being processed faster, thanks to an increase in staff and volunteers from other state agencies and the Legislature. Director Murakami said individuals can check the status of their claims 24/7 at [huiclaims2020.hawaii.gov/status](http://huiclaims2020.hawaii.gov/status). He also urged people to make sure their information is complete and accurate before they submit their forms since that would affect how quickly they receive payments. DLIR said between April 17-23 it distributed more than \$68 million in unemployment insurance benefits, including "plus-ups."



To speed the claims process, more sites and volunteers are helping.

Because so many people may be applying for unemployment benefits for the first time, Murakami said the [DLIR website](#) now has step-by-step instructions and video tutorials to walk people through the process. Self-employed individuals and gig workers — a group previously not covered by unemployment benefits — can go to [pua.hawaii.gov](http://pua.hawaii.gov) for federal **Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA)** to begin the application process. **Keep checking the government agency sites and the governor's home page for updates.**

## Worried about rent and mortgage payments?

**W**hat relief is available for paying my mortgage? Can a landlord evict me if I don't pay my rent? What are my rights as a landlord? DCCA's Office of Consumer Protection is providing answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) to help homeowners and renters with questions related to the **Landlord-Tenant code**. This FAQ, along with more information regarding the Hawai'i Landlord-Tenant code is available at <https://cca.hawaii.gov/ocp/landlordtenant/>. Governor Ige's **sixth emergency supplementary proclamation** extends his earlier eviction moratorium, which prevents eviction from a residential dwelling for failure to pay rent. Rent is still payable, though, and it's recommended that tenants speak with their landlords to see if forbearance or a partial payment plan can be negotiated. **The extended moratorium on evictions is in effect until May 31.** DCCA's Office of Consumer Protection can, on behalf of the public, investigate or prosecute someone who has engaged in price gouging or unfair practices. Persons can file a complaint by going to the OCP website at [www.hawaii.gov/dcca/ocp](http://www.hawaii.gov/dcca/ocp) or call (808) 587-4272. For a full list of online services, go to <https://cca.hawaii.gov/covid19>.

### STAY UPDATED WITH DOH'S COVID-19 WEBSITE

If you want to follow the latest news on COVID-19, be sure to check the Department of Health's site — [www.hawaiiicovid19.com](http://www.hawaiiicovid19.com) — for links to news from the state's counties, the governor's latest mandates, statewide health advisories, and links to sites such as the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center, which includes national and global tracking of the pandemic. The site also has **printable materials in several languages and infographics sized for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter**. It serves as a hub for Hawai'i's coordinated community effort to combat the disease statewide. The public can also receive news through the [COVID-19 Community Bulletin](#).

### FEMA assistance for private non-profits

Community, non-profit, and faith-based organizations with COVID-19-related emergency expenses may be eligible for the **Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Public Assistance Program**, said the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency. As part of its mission, FEMA provides grants to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments so they can continue offering critical community services. For details, go to <https://www.fema.gov/>.

# Quick links to survive in uncertain times

If you're struggling to deal with the basic necessities of life, where can you go for help? Here are some links for anyone who is facing the multiple challenges of being unemployed, putting food on the table, and finding childcare and medical coverage. **The state Department of Human Services, which has already approved thousands of requests, is averaging a two-day processing time.**



We are here for you  
and together, we are...

#ohananuistrong

**For SNAP, Medicaid and other assistance?** Struggling families and individuals are urged to apply online at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/> and let officials figure out applicant eligibility. During an April 14 Facebook Live "Community Connection" session, Governor Ige and Pankaj Bhanot, director of the Department of Human Services, described a variety of assistance, child care services (especially for essential workers), and other resources for families under stress. Many of the requirements have been waived by federal agencies and under the governor's executive order to make it easier for people to get assistance. **For child care services**, community and essential workers can go to the [DHS site](#) for a list of available child care providers. **Look for the yellow banner on the home page.** The state's Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) has a new website for families with young children. The site includes child care resources and how to apply for child care subsidies. Go to <https://sites.google.com/eoel.hawaii.gov/covid-19/home>.



**Need other emergency food aid?** The **Hawaii Foodbank** has a listing under "programs" with a schedule of food distribution sites on O'ahu and contacts for food banks on the neighbor islands. They are also partnering with the **Hawai'i Farm Bureau** to provide fresh produce and meat from across the state. Foodbank CEO Ron Mizutani said they usually distribute nearly 1 million pounds of food every month, but he expects that demand to nearly double. To make a donation or participate in a virtual food drive, visit [www.hawaiifoodbank.org](http://www.hawaiifoodbank.org) or call 836-3600. Seniors receiving lunches as part of the **Show Aloha Challenge** home meal delivery program will soon be offered dinner service, too. To sign up for Show Aloha Challenge lunch and/or dinner delivery, call St. Francis Healthcare System at (808) 547-6501.

**Domestic abuse prevention:** Contact the **Department of Health hotline** via text at 605-956-5680 or call 808-531-3371 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. During non-office hours, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline 24-7 at 1-800-799-7233. Dial 911 if it's an emergency. **Feeling stressed or depressed?** If you need extra support, the Hawai'i Department of Health has expanded its **24-hour Crisis Line**. Call 1 (800) 753-6879, or text the word ALOHA to 741741. The state has another crisis hotline that's also available 24/7, with professionals who specialize in helping people cope with crisis. If you live on O'ahu, call 832-3100. On the neighbor islands call 1-800-753-6879. [The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) can be reached at 1-800-273-8255.

## How the CARES Act can help Hawai'i

Help from the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Securities Act (a.k.a. the CARES Act)** includes direct cash payments to Hawai'i residents, "plus-up" unemployment benefits, small business loans, funds for college students and human services programs to feed and house needy families. The scope is massive — and can be confusing — especially as people worry about just meeting basic needs. Hawai'i's U.S. Sen. Brian Schatz's site at <https://www.schatz.senate.gov/coronavirus> links to fact sheets and other state resources. Other members of the state's Congressional delegation also have CARES information on their websites.

**Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) - Good news for Hawai'i's small businesses:** The **Small Business Administration will resume accepting PPP applications** from participating lenders, following Congressional approval of a second COVID-19 relief package. In the first round, more than 7,500 local companies were approved to receive \$1.6 billion in PPP funds to help preserve more than 100,000 jobs statewide. SBA also is offering small businesses additional economic disaster loans of up to \$2 million, including **agricultural enterprises**. For details, go to [sba.gov](http://sba.gov). Other help for local farmers and ranchers is available through the **Department of Agriculture** at [hdoa.hawaii.gov](http://hdoa.hawaii.gov).

## For some, aloha means goodbye

Stepped up visitor contact checks, statewide enforcement, and sending violators back where they came from are among the latest efforts to ensure people are taking **the governor's COVID-19 quarantine mandate** seriously. Overall passenger arrivals have declined by 98 percent, compared to when 30,000 passengers were arriving daily in Hawai'i.



**Arriving passengers on trans-Pacific flights** will have their temperature taken. Anyone with a high temperature will receive a medical assessment by paramedics at the airport. After verifying the required forms, officials will call the cell phones in the presence of the visitors to verify the numbers, double-check local addresses and increase follow-up calls and hotel coordination to catch violators.

To date, the **Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai'i (VASH)** has helped to return home nearly 20 visitors who weren't prepared to follow the 14-day quarantine, using a Hawai'i Tourism Authority COVID-19 program.

## BRIGHT SPOTS

# DOE feeds hungry students with Grab-and-Go meals

There's a saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." That could apply to the food service crews at more than **70 public schools** who are on the job from 6 a.m. weekdays to prepare thousands of **free "Grab-and-Go" breakfasts and lunches for children up through age 18**. The meals will continue into the summer at select schools as the state copes with COVID-19. The Department of Education has announced a telework "continuity of learning" for students and teachers to complete the school year through May 28 while physical school buildings remain closed. DOE Superintendent Kishimoto said it "broke our hearts" to not permit traditional commencements because of COVID-19 concerns, but schools can consider holding "alternative celebrations."



"The schools represent more than schools," said Randall Tanaka, assistant superintendent for the Office of Facilities and Operations. "We're to some degree a social safety net for those that can't afford food or need this support. We see this as part of our responsibility to the community. Cars start lining up early for the breakfasts served from 7:30 to 8 a.m. and lunch from 11:30 to noon. Updates to the list of schools will be posted at <http://bit.ly/COVID19HI>. For updates on summer school and new developments, go to <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Pages/Home.aspx>.

## Heartfelt kōkua to keep everyone safe

**H**elping hands for PPE - For a second time in a month, volunteers from across O'ahu gathered at the Neal Blaisdell Center (NBC) to help assemble personal protective equipment (PPE) purchased by the state Department of Health for front-line healthcare workers. Over 150 volunteers answered the call, representing a wide range of community organizations. The volunteers worked in 11 rooms at the NBC, properly spaced apart so they could practice safe social distancing.



A volunteer assembles PPE.

**Everyone's making masks** - Inmates at Waiawa Correctional Facility, Kulani Correctional Facility and Hawai'i Community Correctional Center have been sewing thousands of cloth masks for the Public Safety Department staff, inmates and other state agencies to prevent COVID-19 spread. The project began with the Hawai'i Correctional Industries (HCI) providing the fabric and sewing machines for the inmates. To donate equipment or supplies, contact HCI at (808) 677-6638 or email [psd.hawaiici@hawaii.gov](mailto:psd.hawaiici@hawaii.gov).

**FDA-approved hand sanitizers** - A "sanitizer hui" organized by Governor Ige's office with KoHana Hawaiian Agricole Rum and other community partners is producing hundreds of gallons of hand sanitizers, donated to first responders and service providers.

## Creating a roadmap to recovery for Hawai'i

**F**or Hawai'i, what does economic recovery in the wake of COVID-19 look like? Many of the answers will come from a collaboration of public health experts, community stakeholders, economic advisors and legislative leaders, led by veteran business executive **Alan M. Oshima**, former president and CEO of Hawaiian Electric Company, Inc. Oshima was selected to "navigate" the efforts of the governor's office, based on his business acumen and volunteerism with community organizations. He will be coordinating with the **House and Senate COVID-19 committees** and others to develop the state's phased recovery.



Alan Oshima looks ahead.

Both **Senate President Ron Kouchi** and **House Speaker Scott Saiki** reinforced the importance of building on the partnerships with the Ige administration that formed at the start of the 2020 legislative session. Oshima emphasized, "There are so many individuals and organizations that want to help and have already started looking for solutions. The **Hawai'i Economic and Community Recovery & Resiliency Plan** will include a three-part strategy to address the economic and community impacts of COVID-19. They include **stabilization** (immediate health and economic needs), **recovery** (job growth and investment); and **resiliency** (restructuring for Hawai'i's "new normal" and a stronger future). [Learn more at recoverynavigator.hawaii.gov](https://recoverynavigator.hawaii.gov).

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