

Beyond Recovery: Reopening Hawai'i

A strategy to reopen and reshape Hawai'i's economy



AUGUST 2020

Now, more than ever: Fighting COVID-19 together

Mask up . . . keep your distance . . . wash your hands. How many times have we heard Governor Ige and health officials remind us of precautions to keep our community safe? Now, with schools reopening and a new Sept. 1 launch date for pre-travel testing, those warnings should be hitting home. The reality is we're living in a COVID-19 world with no easy answers —especially for jump-starting the economy. But this much is certain: We all have to take responsibility if we're going to fight this virus together.

Q. Why was it important to delay the program for trans-Pacific travel until Sept. 1?

A. The mayors, emergency responders and I all agree that the safety of our community is our top priority. The COVID-19 outbreaks in some of Hawai'i's main visitor markets, our own local increase in cases, disruptions in our testing supplies and schools reopening this month all contributed to this decision. We understand that our state's well-being is tied to restarting the economy and that we need to develop a program that allows us to safely return people to work.



"Mask up" is the main message Governor Ige and health officials want to emphasize in the weeks ahead. Local artist Shar Tuiaosa of Punky Aloha Studios shares her island-style support.

Q. Do we need a stepped-up campaign for controlling community spread of COVID-19?

A. We need to drive home the point that all of our actions are connected. We don't want people letting down their guard. We're concerned how quickly the virus can spread from just one person to several individuals in many different settings —inside and outside — and that significant numbers of people may be asymptomatic. For the sake of our whole community, everyone needs to take this virus seriously and do what they can to protect others. We're also working to ensure we have a baseline of testing supplies we can count on. Right now, the supplies are going to the states with the biggest outbreaks.

Q. What more can we do by Sept. 1 to prepare for more trans-Pacific travelers?

A. We're focusing on the things we have the most direct control over. That includes our multi-layered system of screening, an app that will help us stay in touch with large numbers of people, and building up the best quarantine enforcement possible. We need to get to the point where every traveler coming off of a trans-Pacific flight will have pre-entered contact information so we'll know who was able to pre-test and who needs to be checked for quarantine compliance.

Q. Are you concerned that the pandemic has become too politicized?

A. Yes, it's disheartening that virtually every decision nationally has been based on politics rather than what will help protect communities in this public health emergency. It's unconscionable that wearing a mask, which health experts have told us can dramatically reduce the spread of COVID-19, has been made into a political statement. I'm proud to see that in Hawai'i masks are treated as a common sense way to protect everyone.

Q. What help can local residents expect from CARES Act funding? What is the outlook for more federal funds to help the state?

A. For now, we're working with the state agencies on how to best use CARES Act funds to provide a safety net for all those who lost their jobs. The Legislature designated funds for rental assistance, unemployment benefits, food security and other basic needs. We also need to know whether Congress will provide additional funds to help with our state's operating costs. Since March 1, we've processed more than \$2.3 billion in unemployment benefits. I've also extended the moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent until Aug. 31. More federal aid will be critical to helping those still out of work and the state's budget deficit.

Stopping the virus in its tracks begins with all of us

“This is a wake-up call for all of us that COVID-19 is still a serious threat in Hawai‘i,” said state Department of Health (DOH) director Bruce Anderson. That warning came at a recent news conference as the state reported its highest numbers of COVID-19 cases. Although much of the concern has centered on out-of-state travelers, community spread has also increased in recent weeks. “Our biggest concern is that we continue to see these new cases with no known association to previous clusters,” said state epidemiologist Dr. Park. “The common theme is people are letting their guard down. It’s okay to be with family and friends, but keep your distance and mask up, whether you’re outside or inside.”



DOH's Dr. Anderson and Dr. Park stress the need to stay vigilant. Kailua artist Shar Tuiasoa offers her mask sign for free to businesses.



Governor Ige, Dr. Anderson and Dr. Park emphasized the importance of making smart choices when it comes to activities and dining out. “Choose places where there’s enough physical distance and people are wearing masks,” said the governor. The DOH will continue to closely monitor the number of cases to ensure any increases are manageable. “We expect to see spikes, but we don’t want to see steady increases,” said Dr. Anderson. “Contact tracing is a reactionary step. It doesn’t substitute for distancing, masks, washing hands and the other steps we’ve been taking.”

‘Return to Learn’: Public schools look to different models

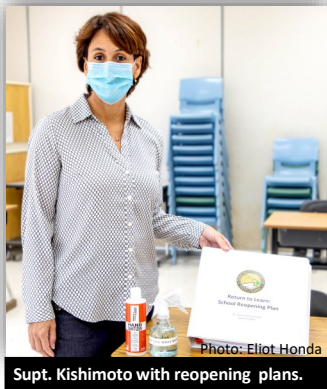


Photo: Elliot Honda
Supt. Kishimoto with reopening plans.

It’s all hands on deck to deliver learning safely and effectively when Hawai‘i’s students return to school this month. From the bus drivers and custodians to teachers and staff — the goal is to create as healthy an environment as possible, said Hawai‘i Department of Education Superintendent Christina Kishimoto. “Our models are based on the state being in the ‘Act with Care’ level of alertness,” she said. This includes wearing masks when possible, physical distancing and regular hand washing as well as deep cleaning of classrooms. As Guy Figueroa, Kapolei Middle School’s head custodian, said, “The pandemic has changed everything we do. It’s a challenge, but we’re up for it. We’ll clean from top to bottom. It’s something we got to do for the kids and our staff.”

The school approaches include face-to-face learning and various blended designs, where in-person and online learning are provided on a rotating basis. Priority for in-person instruction will go to K-2 students and vulnerable students who need extra support. Parents who select the virtual-only option need to work with their home school to commit to a program where students can earn a credit or grade. Superintendent Kishimoto said the pandemic has also revealed the need for more technology access among families. “Some students have tech at home while others have no connectivity,” she said. The DOE has ordered more devices for students and plans to build its “equity of access” plan around digital learning. It’s also launching an ‘Ohana Help Desk,’ with a hotline and email for parents having tech difficulties at home. “If we can improve the tech skills of our families, that helps our ‘ohana, our communities and the entire state to advance economic development.” For more details, go to the [Return to Learn: School Reopening Plan](#).

UH system prepares for ‘unprecedented semester

From required face coverings to reconfigured classrooms and hybrid approaches to learning, the 10 UH system campuses are gearing up for the start of the fall semester Aug. 24. Each campus is adopting precautions as it figures out how to safely deliver courses through a combination of in-person and distance learning. “It is a monumental task to prepare for an unprecedented semester,” said UH President David Lassner. The university system’s top priority remains the health, safety and well-being of its students, employees and visitors, Lassner said. The guidelines include requiring face masks when interacting in person with others; adjusting class sizes for physical distancing; regular disinfecting of classrooms and ‘high-touch’ surfaces; and modifications to residence halls and campus eateries.



UH President David Lassner

UH Mānoa plans to reduce the number of on-campus housing slots from 3,000 to 2,000 with non-O‘ahu freshmen being given first priority. All other students will be selected for housing through a lottery. “We know that many local students are still deciding whether or not they should go off to the mainland,” Lassner said. “They are seeing some universities going fully online and considering whether that’s something worth going away for.” Lassner also announced a “modified quarantine” for out-of-state students registered to attend campuses on O‘ahu and Kaua‘i. The guidelines allow a student who tests negative for COVID-19 and meets other health requirements to take part in university activities. At press time, no exemption was available in the counties of Maui and Hawai‘i. In addition to most of the UH system campuses, the special arrangement also applies to Hawai‘i Pacific, Chaminade, and Brigham Young University-Hawai‘i.



Attorney General Clare Connors and Paul Jones, deputy chief of the AG's investigative division (left), talk with Governor Ige on his Facebook Live's Community Connection.

Making quarantine work to protect the community

It's the travel quarantine breakers who usually make the headlines, but the majority of returning residents and out-of-state visitors are complying with the rules, said Paul Jones, deputy chief of the Attorney General's investigative division. He and Attorney General Clare Connors fielded questions on a July 16 Facebook Live session with Governor Ige. "Hawai'i is one of the few states that have taken action to ensure the 14-day quarantine really means something," said the governor.

Since the quarantine took effect in March, teams of people have been keeping tabs on returning residents and visitors through calls, texts, a SafeTravels app and in-person checks. "Enforcement of the quarantine is always going to be a challenge," said Attorney General Connors, "but I want to reassure people that we have systems in place at every level to protect our community." This system includes quarantine monitoring by state and county law enforcement agencies, visitor industry and Department of Transportation staff, and community members who are the lookout for quarantine breakers. Nearly 200 people have been arrested on O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui and Hawai'i island so far.



Californians Cari Pang Chen and her daughter rejoin their 'ohana after their successful 'Quarantine Adventure.'

For face-to face compliance visits on O'ahu, Jones and his team of special agents are deployed to different parts of the island to follow up on calls and texts to travelers. "I would say that most people do comply with the quarantine rules," he said. "In fact, many thank us for checking on them. They know it's incumbent on all of us to keep our community safe." As of July 17, teams have called some 27,000 visitors and made more than 113,000 calls, texts and emails. Jones said his team had done over 350 compliance checks in the last five weeks. Both Connors and Jones emphasized that enforcement involves actual investigations and gathering evidence such as photos and videos, surveillance footage and witness testimony that will stand up in court. If a person is arrested and charged with breaking quarantine, the bail could be set at \$2,000, with a fine of up to \$5,000 or imprisonment up to one year, or both.

If people suspect a quarantine violator in their community, what steps should they take? "If you have evidence that you know someone is breaking quarantine, then call 911 non-emergency on O'ahu and dedicated lines on the neighbor islands," Connors said.

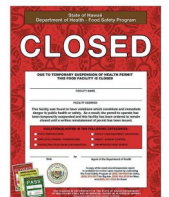
CARES Act funds in the pipeline

The governor's signing of Senate Bill 126 on July 31 means that \$636 million in federal CARES Act funding could be available to help Hawai'i families and other community areas that need it most — from rental aid, food subsidies and other basic needs to unemployment benefits, PPE supplies, job training and small business innovation. The Legislature appropriated the funds to be deployed by multiple state agencies to address pressing community issues created by COVID-19.

"The Legislature and I clearly recognize the need," said Governor Ige. "The bill addresses both short-term and long-term challenges." Part of the Ige administration's responsibility is to review legislation for any legal or other issues. The governor said allocations will also depend on whether Congress provides more aid. "We know the urgency for this funding, so we just have to find the best uses possible," the governor said. More details will be announced in the coming weeks.

State to close restaurants, bars that ignore COVID-19

There are now severe consequences for food establishments that ignore rules to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Hawai'i Department of Health's Food Safety Branch will issue red placards temporarily suspending the operations of restaurants, bars and other eateries that don't comply with physical distancing, wearing masks and other required guidance.



"Most food establishments in Hawai'i are conscientious and trying their best to comply with health guidance," said state Health Director Bruce Anderson. "Nevertheless, we feel these steps are necessary to ensure all restaurants and other food establishments are doing everything they can to protect the health of the public and their employees."

BRIGHT SPOTS

Community concern, shared values make #HawaiiStrong

Kindness. Persistence. And making a difference in ways big and small — from wearing a mask to standing up to injustice and helping those in need. Those basic values are part of the foundation of Hawai‘i. “Now in this pandemic, we need to rely on each other more than ever,” said First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige. “Our sense of ‘ohana and community concern are what will see us through in tough times.”

To help reinforce these messages, Mrs. Ige’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FirstLadyofHawaii/> has become a jumping off point to remind folks of what binds us together. In a new partnership with ‘Olelo, Mrs. Ige’s Storytime is being broadcast on Channel 53. For August, the featured book is “**She Persisted**” by Chelsea Clinton, which introduces readers to 13 inspirational women who didn’t take “no” for an answer in pursuing their goals, and who always *persisted*. “We chose the book partly to encourage young people to follow their dreams and to honor the women in history who stood up for what they believed in,” Mrs. Ige added.



In her “Q&A Hawai‘i,” guests from different agencies have provided practical advice and personal insights. The subjects have ranged from the interisland travel process to visiting state parks. Also, as the honorary chair of “**Goodwill Goes Glam**” for the past six years, Mrs. Ige lent her support to the July 21 “home edition” of the popular event on KGMB-TV. Goodwill’s simple yet powerful message of “Donate stuff. Create local jobs” has taken on renewed meaning during the pandemic. “Goodwill has so many outstanding programs,” Mrs. Ige said. “The governor and I appreciate their work and all of the state’s non-profits as they help the most vulnerable of our community.”

Passenger screening technology being installed at airports

Thermal temperature screening technology is being installed at Hawai‘i’s public airports to help protect the community and identify passengers with potentially elevated body temperatures, the state Department of Transportation has announced. **NEC Corporation, NEC Corporation of America and their partner, Infrared Cameras Inc.** will provide the equipment, installation and a 10-year maintenance plan for a total of \$37.5 million. The equipment will be installed first at the gates for arriving trans-Pacific flights, then at remaining gates in the coming weeks.



“Taking these steps shows our commitment to providing preventative measures against COVID-19 for the community,” said **Governor Ige**. “It is an available tool that can be combined with the additional measures the state is providing to help prevent the spread of this virus, while helping to rebuild the economy.” The system incorporates privacy protections and will only temporarily retain a picture of a person with an elevated temperature of 100.4 degrees and above to help airport representatives identify them and conduct additional assessments. The picture will be erased within 30 minutes and will not be shared with any outside agencies. Anyone with a temperature below 100.4 degrees will not have their image retained at all. The use of this technology is anticipated to be safer and more cost effective than manual temperature checks.

Mandatory interisland travel and health form now online

Ticketed interisland travelers should visit the Hawai‘i Department of Health travel website at <https://health.hawaii.gov/travel/> to fill out the required, fillable form and submit it online within 24 hours of their flight departure. This upgrade to the paper form saves passengers time and allows information to enter the database in real time. The form includes health and contact details needed to trace close contacts if a passenger becomes ill.

Once the form is submitted, passengers will receive an email with a QR code. They should bring the code with them to the airport, either on an electronic device (preferred) or printed. The form cannot be submitted outside of the 24-hour time frame. Passengers with boarding passes will proceed to checkpoints where they will have their temperature taken. Those with a temperature of 100.4 or above will not be allowed to fly. The forms must be submitted for passengers before each flight.

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