

**PROTECT
PUBLIC HEALTH**

**REVIVE
THE ECONOMY**

**STRENGTHEN
OUR COMMUNITY**

CAPITOL CONNECTION

OCTOBER 2020

From the governor: Hawai'i's Pandemic Action Plan

A new COVID-19 leadership team for better response and community input. New programs to help people pay their rent and survive unemployment. More effective ways to monitor the virus — including a new COVID-19 dashboard, better contact tracing, and record-setting “surge testing.” And now, the Oct. 15 launch of a pre-travel testing program to keep the community safe and help local businesses recover. This edition talks about the three priorities of the **Hawai'i Pandemic Action Plan: protecting public health, reviving the economy and strengthening our community** as we fight this virus together.

Q. Looking ahead, are there hopeful signs for the state?

A. Yes, there are many positive signs. When you look at the trends, **the COVID-19 case numbers are coming down.** From our surge testing of more than 60,000 people — the best response in the nation — the good news is the virus isn't so widespread. Our new, realigned leadership team is committed to providing a better, faster response to this pandemic and implementing a plan that addresses public health, economic and community concerns, including more help for the unemployed and businesses, and the Oct. 15 start of the pre-travel testing program for residents and visitors.

Q. What gives you confidence in your new COVID-19 leadership team?

A. They're taking the lessons learned from the past few months and building on them. **Dr. Libby Char**, the new Department of Health director, is a seasoned emergency room physician used to dealing with crises. She's a strong, calm leader who understands the need to prioritize. HI-EMA Director **Ken Hara** will make sure we're harnessing enough resources at the federal, state and county levels. **Lt. Gov. Green** will be focusing on new, better methods for testing and a future vaccination plan. And former Health director, **Dr. Ginny Pressler**, will lead the new **Laulima Alliance** to give public and private sectors a voice in decision-making.

Q. Are we always going to be faced with a cycle of relaxing and tightening restrictions? Is this the “new normal”?

A. Yes, until we have a vaccine, we have to respond to virus activity in the community. That's the challenge and the dilemma. We want to revive the economy, get people back to work and support businesses, but if some people aren't taking precautions, then we get increased cases, which overwhelm the medical system and we have to shut down. It's all connected. It's natural that people want to return to life as it was, but this *is* the “new normal.” Some may think the state can just control the virus, but government can only do so much. It's up to each of us to realize we have the power to control the spread. If we do, we can find the balance between protecting public health and loosening restrictions. Otherwise, if we get a spike in cases, we have to impose restrictions again.

Q. What should we know about the Oct. 15 launch of the Safe Travels pre-testing program?

A. The COVID-19 pre-testing program is part of the multi-layered screening process for all incoming travelers — residents and visitors — arriving in Hawai'i. Starting Oct. 15, incoming travelers are subject to the 14-day quarantine unless they can produce evidence of a negative FDA-authorized NAAT test result from a certified lab, administered within 72 hours from the final leg of departure. We're working with partners like CVS and Kaiser Permanente (members only) who have committed to meeting the parameters. We're also working with the visitor industry to provide a good experience for travelers while keeping the community safe.

Q. What have been the challenges in developing a plan for reopening schools?

A. It's not a one-size-fits-all situation. A key metric is the number of positive COVID-19 cases per 10,000 population over a 14-day period by island as well as how well each school complex is able to mitigate the spread of the virus. This guidance from the Department of Health can help school leaders choose between online only, blended or face-to-face learning.



Governor Ige explains the new Rent Relief & Housing Assistance Program.

Rental assistance available for hard-hit residents



The state's new Rent Relief and Housing Assistance Program (RRHAP) will help Hawai'i residents with payments of up to \$2,000 a month for O'ahu households and \$1,500 a month for neighbor island households. Those eligible include renters who are unemployed or partially unemployed due to the pandemic and have a household income at or below 100 percent of area median income. (In Honolulu, that's \$88,200 for a single individual or \$125,900 for a family of four.)

The new program was announced last month by Governor Ige and Denise Iseri-Matsubara, Hawaii Housing and Finance Development Corporation executive director. "We want to keep people in their homes during this very difficult time," said the governor. "Working with the Legislature, we directed \$50 million in federal CARES Act funds for the first phase of this program." Plans for a second phase are being finalized, with another \$50 million dedicated to additional coverage of rents and mortgages. Applications are currently being accepted for housing payments due between August 1, 2020 and December 28, 2020. Payments will go directly to landlords and can be made in lump sum amounts. To apply, go to www.hihousinghelp.com or contact either Catholic Charities Hawai'i or Aloha United Way, the non-profit partners helping applicants through the process.

DLIR issues \$3B in benefits, launches lost wages aid

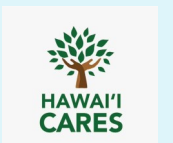
The state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations continues to make progress to resolve unemployment claims and has implemented a new system for those who lost jobs because of COVID-19. To provide several weeks of additional benefits for those hit by the pandemic, the department has set up a -certification system for payments through the **Lost Wages Assistance program (LWA)**, retroactive to Aug. 1, 2020. The program will pay \$300 for six weeks of benefits to all eligible claimants who receive at least \$100 per week in unemployment insurance benefits.

"This will bring some relief to many who are still unemployed due to COVID-19," said the governor. "We're trying to maximize all available federal funds to help those who are struggling." DLIR also reports it has issued more than \$3 billion in UI benefits since March 1.

Regular UI/PEUC claimants are required to sign into their accounts on the unemployment insurance portal and answer a pop-up page that allows them to self-certify that they were partially or wholly unemployed due to COVID-19. If you are a PUA claimant, you have already certified that your unemployment was due to the pandemic. For more details, go to <http://labor.hawaii.gov/ui/main/faq-lost-wages-assistance-lwa/>.

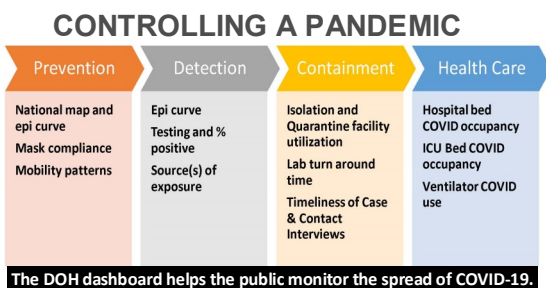
When you need to be alone

Need a place to quarantine or isolate because of COVID-19? You can call the Health Department's Hawai'i CARES line at 832-3100 or 1-800-753-6879 for placement or in-home services. "No one in need is turned away," said DOH deputy director Edward Mersereau on a recent media tour of the Pearl Hotel Waikiki. The hotel is one of four housing people referred through the CARES program.

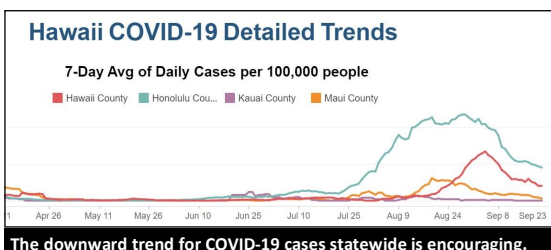


The program helps those living in crowded, multigenerational households; first responders; individuals without shelter; and others unable to safely quarantine or isolate while awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test or who have tested positive for the virus.

New state dashboard for better public information



How do you control a pandemic? Part of the answer involves corraling as much real-time data as possible so everyone can see the same information and understand how we can curb the spread of COVID-19. The new Department of Health dashboard at <https://hawaiicovid19.com/dashboard/> includes contact tracing and testing capacity, mask-wearing behavior, modes of transmission with cases and clusters, ICU beds, and quarantine availability. The DOH site also includes dramatic stories from COVID-19 survivors to drive home the point that this virus is "nothing like the flu."



Kauai District Health Officer and dashboard collaborator Dr. Janet Berreman said the new DOH dashboard helps monitor COVID-19 indicators across the full spectrum of disease control actions: **prevention, detection, containment and treatment**. DOH deputy director Edward Mersereau added, "People will be able to see whether or not policies and strategies are having the intended impact so they can make informed decisions for their personal well-being."

A COVID action plan and leadership team for Hawai'i

To fight the pandemic on all fronts, deploying the best community resources available, Governor Ige and his team are implementing a plan to help us navigate the pandemic in the months ahead. The **Hawai'i Pandemic Action Plan** lays out in simple terms what the top three priorities are for the state. The priorities — protect public health, revive the economy and strengthen our community — cover the key actions we as a community need to take to strike a crucial balance between public safety and economic recovery.



Gov. Ige and his COVID-19 leadership team: Dr. Char, Director Hara, Dr. Pressler and Lt. Gov. Green.

Governor Ige's new leadership team will oversee the state's COVID-19 public health response and the Oct. 15 launch of a pre-travel testing program for trans-Pacific travel. "This new, realigned team gives us a stronger operational structure, stronger leadership, and clears the way for stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors," said the governor. The team includes **Dr. Libby Char**, new Department of Health director; **Lt. Gov. Dr. Josh Green**, who will spearhead the pre-travel testing program and planning for the state's COVID-19 vaccination strategy; **Maj. Gen. Ken Hara**, Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency director and incident commander; and **Dr. Virginia Pressler**, former DOH director, who will lead the **Laulima Alliance**, a public-private group to ensure a community voice in policy making in response to the pandemic.

Dr. Char, who has been nationally recognized for her work in emergency care, said, "This is a critical time in the health of our community. It's important for us to work hand in hand with government, private healthcare partners and the community to respond to the pandemic." Director Hara underscored those sentiments, especially with the recent support provided by the Hawai'i National Guard's Joint Task Force in numerous areas, including contact tracing and community testing.

Hawai'i Pandemic Action Plan — Top 3 Priorities

PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH	REVIVE THE ECONOMY	STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Effectively test, trace, isolateEnsure our healthcare system is prepared for future surgesFinalize a vaccination strategyEnsure everyone follows the 3 Ws: WEAR a mask WASH your hands WATCH your distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Launch pre-travel testingSupport businesses on safe and phased reopening to get people back to workHelp get residents into new jobs through workforce development programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Distribute CARES Act fundsProvide timely and sufficient support to the unemployedMinimize housing lossFacilitate the safe return of students and teachers to the classroom

The complex, interconnected actions involving the whole community.

Hawai'i to start pre-travel testing for residents, visitors

To protect public health and restart the economy, the governor has announced the **Oct. 15 launch of the Safe Travels pre-testing program**. The testing program enables residents and visitors to avoid a mandatory 14-day quarantine if they are tested within 72 hours from the final leg of departure. They must obtain an FDA-authorized nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), performed with a nasal swab, and must show proof of negative test results from a CLIA-certified lab. Currently approved testing partners are CVS and Kaiser Permanente. For more details and FAQs, go to <https://hawaiiicovid19.com/travel/>.

"This pre-travel testing allows us to add a greater element of safety for travel into our state," said the governor. All incoming travelers are required to have their temperatures checked and complete a health and travel form in advance using the Safe Travels digital system. They can upload their test results to the digital platform at <https://travel.hawaii.gov>.

The **Safe Travels form** is a key piece in making trans-Pacific and interisland travel safer. Officials say the new form is vital to the state's multi-step screening process to verify contact and health information and generate quarantine check-in reminders to travelers.

DOH guidelines for schools

Reopening schools is a key part of the state's overall plan to keep everyone safe while restarting the economy and getting people back to work. To do this, the state Department of Health, working with the Department of Education, has released guidance and metrics at health.hawaii.gov for school leaders to use in making decisions.

"We know that when schools begin in-person learning there will inevitably be positive cases," said Dr. Sarah Kemble, acting state epidemiologist. "All schools must be well prepared for this." DOE Superintendent Christina Kishimoto emphasized that any return to campus would be "safe and strategic."

Kishimoto said with the start of the second quarter in October, area complexes would use the metrics to determine **transitioning from Learning from Home to Blended to In-Person Learning models** with different thresholds for elementary and secondary students and regional approaches by island. The metrics can be applied to private as well as public schools.

Kemble said community transmission rates are just part of the decision making. Schools must also assess their ability to mitigate and prevent spread of the virus, including physical distancing, using face masks, establishing smaller student groups, cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and having a communication plan when there is a positive case in the school.

BRIGHT SPOTS

'Q&A Hawai'i': Reaching out in a pandemic

Finding lifelines for Hawai'i's families in this pandemic — whether it's access to food and other resources, free online “teachables,” or information from public health experts — is part of First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige's mission. Each week on her Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/FirstLadyofHawaii/>, you can find practical advice and positive connections to help with some of COVID-19's daily challenges.

In her “Q&A Hawai'i,” Mrs. Ige has talked with state leaders such as **Cathy Betts**, director of the Department of Human Services, to encourage families in need to visit <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/> for information on food benefits, medical care and other aid. Another recent guest was Kaua'i district health officer **Dr. Janet Berreman**, who explained the basics of contact tracing and “family bubbles.”



To help families with distance learning, Mrs. Ige talked with **state librarian Stacey Aldrich** about the launch of “Scholastic Teachables,” a free online resource to support keiki learning at home. Anyone with a Hawai'i State Public Library System card can access the printable materials for ages pre-K to grade 8 at librarieshawaii.org. Another guest was Olympic figure skating champion and book author **Kristi Yamaguchi**, whose “Always Reading” program provides e-readers and hardcover books to children.

Finally, **no Halloween would be complete** without a book like “Creepy Carrots,” which Mrs. Ige reads on Ōlelo for October. The story follows Jasper Rabbit, a rascal who began snitching carrots from a nearby field until he imagines the vegetables stalking him. “In spite of the pandemic, I'm hoping Halloween will still provide a way to spark children's imaginations,” she said.

Virtual bill signings make history for issues in Hawai'i

Several bills became law with the governor's signature recently — from protecting the work of Hawai'i's musicians and managing climate change impacts on shorelines to fighting against domestic violence, abuse and unfair employment practices. They were all part of the state's first virtual bill signings, which can be seen on Governor Ige's [Facebook page](#), to highlight how the legislative process can help Hawai'i make progress on issues, even in a pandemic.



Governor Ige also signed several bills brought forward by the **Women's Legislative Caucus of Hawai'i**. These included **HB2054**, which prohibits an employer from requiring an employee to enter into a nondisclosure agreement pertaining to sexual harassment or sexual assault; and **HB2060**, **HB2425**, and **SB2638** — all aimed at providing more protection for victims of domestic violence and abuse. In addition, two bills — **SB2060** and **HB2590** — helped support the Ige administration's commitment to protecting the environment and improving highway safety. The first bill strengthens protection of coastal areas; the second establishes an autonomous vehicle testing pilot program within the state Department of Transportation. **HB1678**, “**Truth in Music Advertising**,” preserves the integrity of Hawai'i's arts.

STATE ANNOUNCES WORKER TRAINING, PPE SUPPLY CHAIN FUNDS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The state is launching a new job training program for up to 650 workers displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic, using \$10 million in federal CARES Act funds. The program, coordinated by the **Department of Business Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT)**, matches workers with companies in sectors such as conservation, renewable energy, agriculture, creative arts, aerospace, entrepreneurship and STEM fields. The programs offer on-the-job training (to Dec. 15), wages starting at \$13 to \$15 an hour, health care benefits, and mentoring. To be eligible, you need to be a displaced worker or recent high school or college graduate. There are two different tracks in innovation or conservation sectors. To learn more, go to <https://dbedt.hawaii.gov/>

Three local companies producing face shields and hand sanitizers were among the first group of businesses to receive funding to manufacture personal protective equipment (PPE) under a program administered by the **Hawai'i Technology Development Corporation and DBEDT**. Awards can range from \$10,000 to \$500,000, with larger awards possible. The program uses \$10 million in federal CARES Act funds appropriated by the state Legislature. The PPE Supply Chain program provides the grants to local small businesses with 50 employees or fewer. Online applications are being accepted now at www.htdc.org until Oct. 26, 2020. Contact PPE@htdc.org for more assistance and information.

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