



## The Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

Thursday, March 26, 2020

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Senate President Ronald D. Kouchi  
FROM: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19  
RE: Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 Report

Dear Senate President,

Please see the attached report prepared following the March 25, 2020, Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 meeting with the following:

- Department of Health
- Hawaii Emergency Management Agency

Sincerely,

Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole  
Senator Michelle N. Kidani  
Senator Donna Mercado Kim  
Senator Sharon Moriwaki  
Senator Kurt Fevella

Attachment

Cc: All Senators

### **Department of Health**

The Department of Health, represented by Dr. Bruce Anderson (Director), Dr. Sarah Park (Hawaii State Epidemiologist), Dr. Edward Desmond (State Laboratories Division Administrator), and Deputy Director Danette Wong Tomiyasu (Health Resources Administration) provided the committee the following update on our State's response to the COVID-19 epidemic.

### **Confirmed Cases**

- As of March 25<sup>th</sup>, 95 individuals have tested positive for the disease.
- A recent death was mistakenly attributed to COVID-19 due to a human error in reporting the patient's results.
- Emphasized that the public should act as if they have COVID-19 and take social distancing seriously.
- Estimated State will be fighting disease for 4-5 more months.

### **Testing**

- 4,658 tests conducted so far.
  - Private labs have conducted 4,279.
  - State laboratory has conducted 379.
- The State is responsible for verifying positive and inconclusive tests.
- Private labs can process a large volume of tests however, some test samples need to be sent to the mainland for test analysis, which has resulted in a delay of results.
- When combining private, medical and state laboratories, Hawaii has the capacity to conduct up to one thousand tests per day.
- The State plans to automate test reporting to prevent future error.
- Nearly all patients testing positive are travel-related/imported from other areas.
- The State Laboratory is prioritizing testing of critically ill, elderly, those with underlying health conditions and health care workers.
- Asymptomatic individuals may test negative before developing symptoms, which could provide a false sense of reassurance and change their behavior of social distancing.
- There are testing kits to keep up with current criteria, but across the country there are back orders on the components needed for testing, such as nylon swabs and reagents.
- Testing requires health care professionals to use PPE, which are most needed in hospitals.
- The FDA approved a type of testing that can be self-administered today, which may be a resource in the future.
- DOH is not carrying out mass testing, like in South Korea, in order to target limited resources.
  - South Korea implemented invasive practices of isolation that may not be legal in the U.S.
- Instead of mass testing, DOH hopes to use resources judiciously, integrating successful practices of social distancing and contact tracing.
- The 14-day quarantine of arrivals is a stringent example of social distancing, but the general public must integrate social distancing in their daily lives.

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Wednesday, March 25, 2020

- DOH asked the Legislature to consider the cost of mass quarantining, namely:
  - Providing wrap-around human services, such as food and medical care.
  - Legal enforcement.

**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- DOH is monitoring supply and demand of PPE.
  - PPE shortages, hospitals are resorting to practices that would never do during normal situations.
  - State has applied for PPE and other equipment like ventilators from the U.S. National Strategic Supply.
  - Stockpile of PPE but at the current usage rate only enough PPE to last three weeks or less.

**Public Awareness Messaging**

- Agreed it needs to improve messaging to inform the public about when to get tested, seek medical care, and the importance of social distancing.
- State agencies are consulting with private relations firms.
- Governor opened an office to coalesce messaging.
- DOH is finalizing PSA's that will share information on COVID-19 and practices of social distancing, handwashing, etc.
- PSA's are scheduled to roll out on March 30.

**Department of Defense**

Adjutant General Kenneth Hara, Hawaii Emergency Management Incident Commander, provided the committee the following update.

**Quarantine Efforts**

- Stay-at-home work orders are effective.
- Has not yet received reports from the counties.
- A cruise ship did disembark yesterday.
  - Cruise line arranged and paid for the passengers to board a chartered bus and a chartered airplane to return home.
  - Passengers were discharged after medical screening.
  - Passengers were then taken to a separate part of the airport and did not mix with the general population.

**Emergency Management Structure**

- Due to large number of requests, instituted:
  - [covid.kokua@hawaii.gov](mailto:covid.kokua@hawaii.gov) for requests and recommendations from the public.
  - [kokuaexemptions@hawaii.gov](mailto:kokuaexemptions@hawaii.gov) for those offering resources or who need exemptions from the orders and proclamations.
- Decision making is by the Unified Coordination Group.

- Does receive advice from others, including Lt. Governor Green.

### **Medical Supplies and Equipment**

- DOH is plotting and tracking necessary information about the need for medical supplies and equipment.
- Placed orders through the National Stockpile.
- Each medical group has a normal supply chain and they each have some stockpile of equipment.
- Request submitted to FEMA Region 9 for supplies (respirators, ventilators, Personal Protection Equipment, test kits).
- On March 24<sup>th</sup>, received \$39 million from the Department of Budget and Finance.
  - Authorized HIEMA to purchase \$13 million of additional supplies, test kits and PPEs.
  - Have received two major deliveries to date.

### **Hospital Bed Capacity**

- Looking at how to do surge capacity.
- Possibility is to refurbish hotel rooms into hospital rooms.
- Army Corp of Engineers has a plan to turn hotel rooms into the negative pressure room but would still need to provide all equipment and staff to operate.
- DOD is holding on to their capacity to protect their soldiers and their state of readiness.

### **Other Updates**

- Federal employees are exempt from the Governor's and Mayors' orders.
- MG Hara asks the Committee to compile all questions into one email or letter.
- Following MG Hara's report, the Senators focused their questions on how decisions are made under his command and then entered into a detailed discussion about the requirements for and the need to protect the limited supply of medical supplies, hospital beds, test kits, and personal protection equipment.
- Senators and MG Hara discussed the point at which stricter measures would need to be taken to protect our limited supplies and our health care workers.
- MG Hara assisted with a request to President Trump from Governor Ige that Hawaii be placed on national priority list and to determine the high priority items that we need.
- Team used modeling of predictive of COVID-19 spread and planned out the requirements for equipment and PPE for next 6 months.
- Lack of stricter measures will compromise supplies.
- MG Hara receives a daily report on beds, ICU usage and availability.
- Tracks critical supplies of personal protection equipment and test kits.
  - Reports currently inconsistent.
- When losses reach 95% on certain supply items, will be the trigger to take stricter measure.

-End of Report-