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October 8, 2020

Aloha Senate Special Committee on COVID-19,

We are in receipt of your letter dated October 6, 2020 and provide the following responses to your questions regarding State Workforce Assessment.

**Question 1) Is the Department of Human Resources Development (“DHRD”) exploring strategies to meet the 10% budget shortfall, including guidance for examining the functions and services that can be replaced with technology, consolidation and repurposing, etc. to meet the changing needs of the public?**

The administration continues to identify ways to address the unprecedented \$2+ billion budget shortfall that facing the State of Hawaii over the next few years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The executive branch is currently undergoing a program review process to determine which state programs may be outside the definition of a core government function and may be eliminated with minimal impact to the public. Such determinations will be made with an eye toward the future and how government services may be delivered in an innovative manner.

**Question 2) Has DHRD met with the departments to explore strategies to address the changing public needs in light of the current and impending budget shortfall?**

As noted above, the entire executive branch is undergoing a program review process to ensure that core government services continue to be delivered to the public while addressing the impending budget shortfall.

**Question 3) Has the DHRD met with public unions to discuss the deferral of pay increases as a possible alternative to furlough; and, if not, does HRD have alternative proposal(s) to discuss with them?**

Due to the confidential nature of negotiations with public sector unions, we respectfully decline to comment.

**Question 4) Has DHRD taken any action, including convening a task force as requested in SR83 SD1, to review the functions and operations of the state government to identify and make recommendations for modifications, including staffing, to better serve the changing and changed post-pandemic needs of the public?**

While we are familiar with Senate Resolution 83, Senate Draft 1, we regrettably do not have the resources or the time to convene the task force as requested. We continue to feel the effects of the current hiring freeze and inability to fill the 14 full-time positions

that were defunded through this fiscal year. For a department of less than 100, the impact is particularly acute.

Despite these challenges, DHRD continues to refine its recruitment and retention strategies. The successful Wikiwiki hiring program, which expedited the hiring process for certain hard-to-fill positions within the Departments of Transportation, Human Services and Land and Natural Resources, is expanding to additional classes of work. Several departments are interested in expanding Wikiwiki hiring but are unable to do so due to the defunding this past Legislative session. Those who still have funding (special funds or federal funds) will be receiving training shortly, so they can also benefit from this program.

DHRD will begin a formal training program for executive branch human resource professionals so all departments can receive the same, and up-to-date, training on human resource processes and procedures. During our conversations with the departments, it was evident that some departments understand certain policies differently than intended and several asked for formal training. In response to this, DHRD is finalizing a calendar of various HR training classes and will be sharing this with all executive branch departments.

We are also in the process of expanding the flex hiring program for Bargaining Unit 13 to include Units 3 and 4, which will allow the hiring authority to authorize a higher step (up to the sixth step) for incoming employees with excess creditable experience. This allows the state to make a more competitive offer on salaries, which historically has been one of our biggest challenges in recruiting people from the private sector.

DHRD remains committed to investing in the development of our state workforce. Our training division has launched a new Learning Management System which will allow employee-specific training programs for our workforce. In addition, we are about to launch a cohort-based Leadership Academy to train current and future leaders of the executive branch through a blend of on-demand and in-person learning. The Emerging Leader, Experienced Leader and Navigator programs will be open for nominees soon.

We look forward to elaborating further on our activities when we submit our report to the Legislature later this year as required by Act 57, SLH 2019.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these responses. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at [Ryker.Wada@hawaii.gov](mailto:Ryker.Wada@hawaii.gov).

Sincerely,  
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