



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
HONOLULU

DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

April 9, 2020

Senate Special Committee on COVID-19  
Thirtieth State Legislature  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senators:

On behalf of Governor David Y. Ige, this responds to your letter dated April 1, 2020, in which the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 requested the Executive Branch to enact a state-wide policy for facemasks in public spaces, with a priority on healthcare workers, but also public-facing workers such as those in grocery stores and other essential business, as well as the use of substitute facemasks such as scarves.

The Administration previously consulted with the Hawai'i Emergency Management Agency (HIEMA), the Hawai'i Department of Health, and county mayors on this issue who were all in agreement that the guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would be the basis for any statewide policy on facemasks. Therefore, it would have been premature to issue local guidance which may conflict or cause confusion. The CDC guidance<sup>1</sup> is under careful review and the decision on recommendations versus mandates will be made as soon as possible. Counties may provide additional recommendations for their locales.

Messaging is critical considering the new CDC guidance which emphasizes that facemasks are:

- Primarily considered an infection source control measure, designed to keep sick people from spreading pathogens;
- A supplement to social distancing, which is the most effective means of containing community spread and not a substitute for a stay-at-home order, especially for any individuals who are sick with flu-like symptoms;

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

- Less effective than frequent handwashing, avoiding touching the face, and staying away from people who are ill;
- Highly variable in their level of protection based on fit, material used, and condition and could provide some protection from droplets and thus reduce dose of harmful inhalation; and
- Problematic if the wearer has underlying respiratory issues as emphysema.

Recommendations from other states also inform the State's guidance, including considerations for public-facing essential employees.

Sincerely,

*Linda Chu Takayama*

Linda Chu Takayama  
Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor