

MAR 12 2021

S.R. NO. 184

SENATE RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A JOINT STUDY FOR THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON THE
THIRD SENATORIAL DISTRICT.

1 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an
2 infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus,
3 SARS-CoV-2, that has resulted in a world-wide pandemic,
4 infecting almost three million people across the globe resulting
5 in over 300,000 fatalities within the United States and has put
6 an overwhelming strain on medical and government resources; and
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8 WHEREAS, to protect Hawai'i's citizens from the present
9 threat to human life, Governor Ige and all four county mayors in
10 Hawai'i imposed a state of emergency and issued rules and orders
11 restricting daily activities of residents and businesses. The
12 Governor subsequently issued sixteen proclamations mandating
13 statewide safety measures in an effort to curb the spread of the
14 disease; and
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16 WHEREAS, changes in the way that health care is delivered
17 during the COVID-19 pandemic have been implemented to reduce
18 medical staff exposure to ill persons, preserve personal
19 protective equipment, and minimize the impact of patient surges
20 on facilities, including adjusting the way healthcare systems
21 triage, evaluate, and care for patients by using methods that do
22 not rely on in-person services. Additionally, telehealth
23 services provide necessary care to patients while minimizing the
24 transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus; and
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26 WHEREAS, a broad body of research links social isolation
27 measures utilized to contain COVID-19 to poor mental health, and
28 individuals sheltering in place reported negative mental effects
29 resulting from worry or stress related to COVID-19; and
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31 WHEREAS, additionally, research demonstrates that job loss
32 caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with increased
33 depression, anxiety, distress, and low self-esteem and may lead
34 to higher rates of substance use disorder and suicide. Poor
35 mental health due to burnout among front-line workers and



1 increased anxiety or mental illness among those with poor
2 physical health has also been noted; and

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4 WHEREAS, as of December 22, 2020, Hawai'i Island had 1,836
5 confirmed cases of persons affected with COVID-19, resulting in
6 forty-four deaths; and

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8 WHEREAS, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many small
9 businesses in the State, including businesses subject to
10 mandatory capacity restrictions, small, minority-owned
11 businesses, and businesses reliant on tourism have suffered
12 severe declines in revenue; and

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14 WHEREAS, the closure of small businesses in the State has a
15 devastating effect on employees of those businesses, further
16 strains the State's unemployment insurance program, and has
17 other ripple effects throughout the State; and

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19 WHEREAS, in 2020, Hawai'i County reported 51,948 weekly
20 unemployment claims compared to 9,711 claims in 2019, a 435 per
21 cent increase in claims; and

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23 WHEREAS, in the second quarter of 2020, eleven thousand six
24 hundred Hawai'i County residents lost their jobs as a result of
25 the economic recession; and

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27 WHEREAS, many residents have been unable to pay for their
28 household expenses as a result of income disruption from
29 COVID-19, including food, rent or mortgage, transportation
30 costs, broadband access, medical expenses, or student loans; and

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32 WHEREAS, Governor Ige issued and extended a moratorium to
33 forestall any eviction from a residential dwelling for failure
34 to pay rent or lease or other related charge if a resident fails
35 to pay all or any portion of the rent or lease, maintenance
36 fees, utility charges taxes or other fees required by the rental
37 agreement or lease until at least December 31, 2020; and

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39 WHEREAS, because many individuals who are homeless are
40 older adults or have underlying medical conditions, they may be
41 at increased risk for severe illness than the general population
42 and may require access to essential services including



1 childcare, education services, employment assistance, outpatient
2 health services, mental health services, substance abuse
3 treatment services, and transportation; and
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5 WHEREAS, those who experienced food and housing insecurity
6 as a result of the pandemic reported a significant prevalence of
7 rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner
8 compared to those who did not experience food and housing
9 insecurity; and
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11 WHEREAS, domestic violence survivors are especially
12 vulnerable to homelessness due to the dynamics of power and
13 control present in a domestic violence situation, economic
14 instability resulting from the abuse, the effects of trauma, and
15 the need for safety and confidentiality, as well as housing.
16 While sheltering in place slows the spread of COVID-19, it
17 increases rates of domestic violence and sexual assault,
18 especially since victims of domestic violence shelter in place
19 with the person who is harming them; and
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21 WHEREAS, police departments within the State, including the
22 Hawai'i County Police Department have expanded their citation
23 issuance in lieu of arrest policies or are limiting arrests
24 within already established statutory limits in an effort to
25 reduce person-to-person contact between an individual and law
26 enforcement and the likelihood of COVID-19 being brought into
27 correctional facilities; and
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29 WHEREAS, the Judiciary has responded to COVID-19 by
30 postponing matters if necessary, moving proceedings to a remote
31 format when feasible, restricting entrance into courthouses,
32 granting extensions for court deadlines, and adjusting in-person
33 operations in each circuit based on public health circumstances
34 to protect court users and Judiciary personnel; and
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36 WHEREAS, Hawai'i Community Correctional Center is currently
37 operating at one hundred eighty-five per cent of capacity and
38 present efforts to safeguard against COVID-19 outbreaks within
39 correctional facilities are inadequate to allow the inmate
40 population to comply with social distancing standards; and
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1 WHEREAS, a COVID-19 outbreak at Hawai'i correctional
2 facilities would have the potential of placing the inmates at
3 risk of death or serious illness, and endangering the lives and
4 well-being of staff and service providers who work within at
5 these facilities, their families, and members of the community
6 at large; and

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8 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated
9 well-documented gaps that put low-income students at a
10 disadvantage relative to their wealthier peers in areas,
11 including access to devices and broadband, food and nutrition,
12 housing, health insurance and care, and financial relief
13 measures; and

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15 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that research regarding
16 online learning and teaching shows that they are effective only
17 if students have consistent access to the internet and computers
18 and if teachers have received targeted training and supports for
19 online instruction; and

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21 WHEREAS, the Legislature finds that in quarter one of the
22 2020-2021 school year, students in the Third Senatorial District
23 have higher rates of "well-below" marks in English and
24 Mathematics than the state average for elementary school
25 quarterly grades; higher rates of "well-below" marks in English,
26 mathematics, science, and social studies for both middle and
27 high school quarterly grades than the state average; higher
28 rates of being at risk of chronic absenteeism than the state
29 average; and higher rates of being behind grade level
30 expectations for both elementary and middle school students than
31 the state average; and

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33 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that the Third
34 Senatorial District remains particularly vulnerable to the
35 impacts of COVID-19 with a higher than average rate of the
36 population that may face underlying conditions that may
37 exacerbate severity or probability of contracting the disease.
38 Additionally, rural healthcare infrastructure is limited,
39 including emergency medical services, service of large
40 geographical resources, and limited use of telemedicine due to
41 absent or unreliable broadband and internet connections; now,
42 therefore,



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BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, that the Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism in collaboration with the Judiciary, Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, and the Office of the Mayor of Hawai'i County is urged to conduct a needs and gaps analysis that identifies the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on programs in the State that provide services to residents of the Third Senatorial District relating to the economy, health care capacity, education, and public safety; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the analysis is requested to identify programs in the Third Senatorial District that provide medical, economic, educational, and other social services to residents including:

- (1) The amount of funding the program receives each year and funding sources for the program;
- (2) The number of persons the program serves each year, disaggregated by race and gender;
- (3) Limitations on the length of the provision of services for the programs;
- (4) If applicable, reasons for the unavailability for the data; and
- (5) Recommendations for improving the services available to residents of the Third Senatorial District, including any proposed legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism is requested to submit a report of its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the Regular Session of 2022; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Chief Justice of the Judiciary, Director of the Department of



1 Business, Economic Development and Tourism, Chairperson of the
2 Board of Education, Superintendent of the Department of
3 Education, Director of the Department of Health, Director of the
4 Department of Human Services, and Office of the Mayor of Hawai'i
5 Island.

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OFFERED BY:

