

Beyond Recovery: Reopening Hawai'i

A strategy to reopen and reshape Hawai'i's economy



JUNE 2020

From the governor: Reopening the 'kama'āina economy'

"Act with care" is the new watchword for Hawai'i's current phase — reopening the "kama'āina economy." This phase depends on venues taking steps to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and Hawai'i's people "acting with care" to protect themselves and others by wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distancing. Now, more than ever, our safety depends on us working together to protect each other and supporting key public health strategies.

Q. Why is the timing right for reopening the economy? What is your biggest concern?

A. We've always said we would base our decisions on data and the best science to allow us to reopen. Clearly, our low COVID-19 case numbers show we've contained the virus and are able to manage any clusters, without overwhelming our healthcare system. My biggest concern is that people become complacent. We continue to emphasize that this is the new normal so everyone has to wear their masks, practice physical distancing and limit their interactions to keep from infecting others.

Q. What are you and the mayors considering for restarting interisland travel?

A. All the mayors understand this is an important part of our phased recovery. The goal is to create the best system to handle the volume of travelers between the islands while keeping people safe. We want to create a layered, more automated screening process, with thermal scans at the airports, a new traveler app and a form that people can fill out ahead of time, including health status and travel and contact information so we can stay in touch if someone experiences symptoms and needs health care.

Q. What do you want people to know about the budget shortfall and working with the Legislature?

A. Our assumption is the bill the Legislature passed is not going to be the final version. There will be more discussion in June, once we know how large the budget deficit will be. We expressed our concern that putting excess resources in the rainy day fund would force us to implement furloughs, layoffs and other actions to manage the cash flow. It ties our hands at a time when many people are struggling.

Q. What has been the most challenging part of this pandemic? Do the "armchair quarterbacks" and critics ever get to you?

A. I'm clearly focused, and I know that no matter what I do, there will always be criticism. That comes with the job. It's sad that some would put raising political profiles ahead of community needs. But I have continued to be inspired by the overwhelming response from those who have taken the restrictions to heart and have done everything we've asked to contain the virus. That's why Hawai'i has been successful.

Q. What is your message to the Class of 2020 graduates?

A. I want to congratulate our graduates for moving forward at a time of great uncertainty and global challenges. Our students have shown they are adaptable, creative, and resilient. It bodes well for our future that we have young people, our future leaders, who are determined to succeed and work for the good of our community.

STAY AT HOME
(Major Disruption)

SAFER AT HOME
(Moderate Disruption)

ACT WITH CARE
(Minor Disruption)

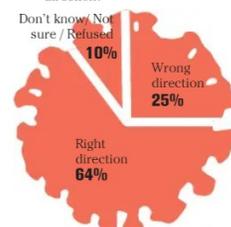
RECOVERY
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NEW NORMAL
(No Disruption)

Governor Ige describes his strategy for the state's recovery from the impacts of COVID-19.

A majority of Hawai'i residents — 64 percent — believe government is moving in the right direction in its handling of the coronavirus crisis, a statewide survey by SMS Research & Marketing has shown. The results are not surprising, given that Hawai'i has some of the lowest death and infection rates in the country. As one legislator said, "You have to give government credit for taking action. It's a tough time to be a governor or a mayor. Somebody has to make the difficult decisions that benefit the whole state."

Q: Overall, do you think Hawaii government's management of the COVID-19 pandemic is headed in the right direction, or do you feel that we are going in the wrong direction?



'Beyond Recovery': A careful, phased approach

In color-coded detail, Governor Ige unveiled a phased, long-term strategy for jumpstarting Hawai'i's economy while urging everyone to continue to protect each other. The **"Beyond Recovery: Reopening Hawai'i"** plan continues the reopening of the "kama'āina economy" in June, starting with medium-risk, followed by high-risk businesses. The list includes hair salons, restaurants for dining-in, gyms, places of worship, theaters and museums. Large venues, bars and clubs will be considered for a later phase, as the highest level of risk. All businesses are asked to follow Centers for Disease Control, industry, and Department of Health guidelines to ensure safety for customers and employees.

The reopening strategy, outlined in the governor's **8th Supplementary Emergency Proclamation**, leaves the specific timing of reopening certain businesses and operations to the county mayors, with approval from the governor. It also extends the 14-day quarantine for arriving passengers, including interisland travelers, and the moratorium on residential evictions through June 30. The reopening of highest-risk businesses and operations will eventually follow, as long as the state's disease activity remains manageable.

The governor thanked the people of Hawai'i for the progress the state has been able to make. "The results speak for themselves," he said. "Because of our safe practices like wearing face coverings and physical distancing, we have the lowest fatality rate in the nation and one of the lowest new case counts. 'Act with Care' means exactly that. It is up to all of us — the businesses and the general public — to make sure we continue to keep each other safe." Risk factors include the size of the space, the number and duration of contacts and limiting interaction through physical distancing and other precautions. **To see the entire "Reopening Hawai'i" strategy**, go to https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Gov_Reopening-Presentation-Slide-Deck_18-May-2020.pdf.

Local farmers grateful for HDOA, community support

Farmers on six islands across the state sent heartfelt messages when they received word they were approved for emergency funds from the state Department of Agriculture (HDOA). A total of \$470,000 through 202 grants from the Emergency Farmer Relief Program provided a lifeline for struggling farmers hit hard by COVID-19. HDOA chairperson Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, the market development branch and fiscal office, and the Department of Accounting and General Services worked together to process the applications and get checks into farmers' hands as quickly as possible.



Local farmers grateful for support.

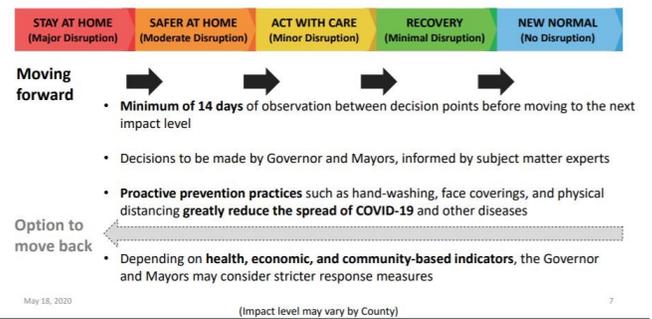
One farmer wrote: "Thank you so much! I'm crying right now. Farming is such hard labor and to have some support makes all the difference in the world." Another said, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!!! This is great news and will make the long hours for our family a little less stressful. We want HDOA to know our farm is ramping up production and getting products out to the community." HDOA also offers an Emergency Agricultural Loan Program that provides low-interest loans up to \$150,000 at 3 percent interest. Farmers should contact their nearest HDOA office or go to <http://hdoa.hawaii.gov/ag/>.

UH prepares for fall return

The 10 campuses of the University of Hawai'i system will be using both on-campus and online instruction for the fall 2020 semester starting Aug. 24, in what is being called a "COVID-19-aware approach" to keep students, faculty and staff safe, said UH President David Lassner. This includes steps to ensure social distancing and hygiene.

"We all realize that the fall will absolutely not be a return to business as usual," said Lassner. "There is still great uncertainty, but plans for the state are taking shape. UH is offering a safe, affordable opportunity for higher education on all islands." **The new deadline for students to apply is Aug. 1.** "We've been getting a lot of interest from families who were thinking of sending their kids to the mainland," UH spokesman Dan Meisenzahl added.

How We Move to the Next Impact Level



May 18, 2020

(Impact level may vary by County)

7

DHHL provides rental relief for waiting list beneficiaries

A new program to provide rental relief for Department of Hawaiian Home Lands Applicant Waiting List beneficiaries launched last month in partnership with Aloha United Way. Eligible native Hawaiians on DHHL's Applicant Waiting List who have experienced a loss of income as a result of COVID-19 may receive help for the payment of their security deposit and/or rent for up to six months.

To apply for DHHL's **COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program**, call AUW at 2-1-1. For more details on rental relief for general lessees, licensees, and permittees, go to dhhl.hawaii.gov/covid-19/lmd or call (808) 620-9500.

A strategy to stay safe as we move to reopen Hawai'i

How do we stay safe in a COVID-19 world as we restart our economy? That's the question everyone is asking as we try to figure out our "new normal." To get some answers, Capitol Connection talked with state epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park and Dr. Edward Desmond, head of the Hawai'i State Laboratories Division. Their answers provide some hope for what Hawai'i is already doing right as well as what to expect for the future.



Governor Ige's Facebook Live session with Dr. Edward Desmond and Dr. Sarah Park.

Q. From a public health perspective, what is the biggest challenge for us in Hawai'i to protect ourselves from COVID-19?

Dr. Park: The challenge will be staying safe while maintaining the human connection that makes Hawai'i special. This virus is going to be part of our lives for a long time. No test, no screening program will keep the virus out, although so far our community has really done its part to control the spread. The young, healthy members of our state may think the virus isn't going to touch them, and even if they get it, they think they're going to be fine. To them, I would say they need to think of the people who aren't as healthy and are more vulnerable to its effects. Now we're seeing even young kids could be affected. All of us need to take responsibility for limiting the number of people we have contact with. Stay in your "ohana bubble" as much as you can.

Q. We keep hearing about the importance of masks, hygiene and physical distancing. It sounds almost too basic for a disease that can be so deadly. Do you expect a "second wave" of the disease?

Dr. Park: The question is how much of a second wave we will see. That will be entirely dependent on us. There's a lot of concern about visitors, but residents can also bring the virus home as people travel. It's a respiratory pathogen that relies on face-to-face contact for transmission. That's why the amount of disease we see in Hawai'i is really dependent on all the precautions we're taking now. When the number of cases is low, it's easy to become complacent.

Dr. Desmond: As basic as it sounds, these measures do work as we've seen in Hawai'i, but it's not going to eliminate the disease. We'll have to accept that life's not going to be the same so we'll have to continue these practices to balance the risks.

Q. Should we be testing more, especially asymptomatic people?

Dr. Park: We're looking at testing, first, people who have COVID-19 symptoms, those who are being seen by their healthcare providers, and those in vulnerable populations — say, long-term care homes — or in households where there is exposure to a positive case. Everyone in that household has to stay in quarantine, **and a negative test will not get you out of quarantine.** But to go to the general public and just test with no context means you're only getting one snapshot in time. The test is imperfect in that kind of situation. You could be negative today, but tomorrow you could get infected. Or you could be in an incubation phase where the virus hasn't produced enough to show a positive.

Q. What guidance can you provide for businesses?

Dr. Park: First, don't rush. There should be a good plan and clear signage to ensure employees and customers are safe. Are high-touch surfaces cleaned? How do you control indoor traffic? We're talking about changing a culture everywhere around the world, and changing it for the foreseeable future. But we also don't want a world where we disconnect from each other.

Go to the DOH's [Hawai'i COVID-19 site](#) for the latest updates.

A comprehensive public health plan

Testing. Contact tracing. Isolation. Sentinel surveillance. **How do they all work together to control COVID-19?** "They're all tools in a toolbox — part of the bigger effort to protect the community," said Dr. Sarah Park. The state's comprehensive approach — together with the community's own precautions — is keeping the case count low and offering a roadmap for how to help Hawai'i weather the COVID storm.

Testing: Hawai'i leads the way among states - Hawai'i is one of only nine states that have exceeded testing minimums to begin to reopen, according to a recent study by the Harvard Global Health Institute. "To prevent outbreaks from flaring up, they advised to, first, test all symptomatic people, then reach out to their close contacts, and require those who are infected or exposed to isolate themselves" — strategies the DOH is following.

Contact tracing and isolation: Building the army - A new partnership with the UH system will expand the workforce for "surge capacity." The plan is the brainchild of Dr. Park and Dr. Aimee Grace, who leads the **UH's UHealthy Hawaii Initiative**. The goal is to train as many as 300 contact tracers in two to three days, or two to three months, depending on their medical and educational backgrounds, as well as 100 community health workers. Anyone interested can visit go.hawaii.edu/AQX or email oshi@hawaii.edu.

"We're increasing our capacity for contact tracing so we'll have a ready workforce," said Dr. Park. "We're also "surging from within," bringing in public health nurses and others within the health department as needed."

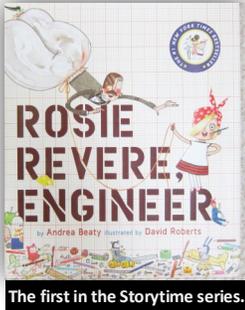
Sentinel surveillance: How does it help? - "The surveillance system allows us to see the potential scope of the disease and where it may have penetrated in the community," said Dr. Park. "Early on, we saw more regional spread of COVID-19, but now it's just isolated pockets." Park said the DOH is aggressively seeking new health care providers to add to the surveillance network. "The more providers involved, the more patients who can get tested and the better our system is to be our eyes on disease activity," she added.

BRIGHT SPOTS

First Lady's Storytime mixes fun with love of reading

Good news for parents looking for a safe, virtual way to inspire a love of reading among their children. First Lady Dawn Amano-Ige has launched a weekly storytime on her [Facebook page](#) that people can access anytime. Mrs. Ige's book choices combine positive messages with fun activities to help families enjoy their time together at home.

The first program featured the book "Rosie Revere, Engineer," about a little girl who dreams big dreams. "By day, Rosie is a shy little girl. By night, she's an engineer who transforms ordinary items into extraordinary gadgets," explained Mrs. Ige. "I chose this as the first book because Rosie never quits — she perseveres. I think that's an important message as we deal with COVID-19. I hear stories every day about how creative people are finding solutions to their problems."



As a former 3rd grade teacher and vice-principal, the first lady knows the value of developing a reading habit. As a parent, she recalled, "The governor and I used to read to our children every night. During the summers, we went together to the library and signed up for reading programs." Now, as first lady, she has launched the 'Ohana Readers program as a pilot project on Moloka'i, which partners with Dolly Par-ton's Imagination Library to provide free books to children under five years of age.

"I want to thank every single person across the state for doing their part in keeping our communities safe and healthy," she said, adding that the state Department of Health has a resource called "The Parentline" that provides resources for parents and caregivers. Anyone can visit theparentline.org or call 526-1222 or toll-free at 1-800-816-1222.

Reaching out to essential workers and the most vulnerable

Who protects the protectors and their patients? For those who provide mental health services, the departments of Health, Human Services, and the Behavioral Health and Homelessness Statewide Unified Response Group (BHHSURG) have been coordinating the distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) statewide. The Governor's Coordinator on Homelessness and his team are part of this effort to ensure service providers are protected as well as filling the gaps for other needs.



On O'ahu alone, 754 screenings of homeless individuals have been conducted in hospital emergency rooms, resulting in only 59 homeless individuals meeting the criteria for testing, and **no homeless individuals testing positive**. Additional screenings occur on a regular basis in encampments and emergency shelters statewide. In early May, staff teamed up with Leeward Coast outreach providers to deliver meals to individuals in encampments, and also worked with Honolulu providers for more outreach to homeless individuals near the State Capitol and in Iwilei. To learn more about efforts to address homelessness during the pandemic, as well as ways to help, please visit <https://bhhsurg.hawaii.gov>.

DLNR: Keep moving for health

If you're looking to escape to your nearest Hawai'i state park, check the list at <https://dlnr.hawaii.gov/dsp/> for which ones are open or closed. The reopening of certain state parks comes with an emphasis on physical distancing and exercise, but with continued restrictions on gatherings for larger groups. In fact, Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) officials strongly encourage residents to stay within their own ahupua'a and neighborhoods rather than traveling to another community's remote park.

Some frequently visited parks, lookout points and narrow trails remain closed because they don't allow for distancing.



Proud graduates Trinity Fulford (left) and Kaile Au-Kanoa

Honoring the Class of 2020

Whether it was a virtual ceremony or a caravan of cars, nothing seemed to dampen the spirits of the Class of 2020 and their families – not even a pandemic. Castle High graduate Kaile Au-Kanoa summed up the determination of many students in the face of COVID-19 when she said, "Push through and keep going!" Kaile has a full scholarship to Windward Community College.

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