



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

P. O. BOX 3378
HONOLULU, HI 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

August 16, 2020

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki
Speaker of the House
House of Representatives
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SENT VIA EMAIL

Dear Speaker Saiki:

Mahalo for your meaningful suggestions regarding public notification as to transmission risks as well as your recommendations regarding contact tracing. I share your concerns and want to assure you that the Department of Health (Department) is actively making changes to enhance our capacity and improve our performance and transparency in these areas.

Regarding transparency and information sharing with the public, the Department is preparing a new data dashboard, which will share metrics about disease prevention, detection, containment, and health care capacity. We also are in the process of determining how better to publicly provide additional details about transmission events, without violating privacy or health information protections, to give the public a deeper appreciation for the breadth and depth of risk currently posed to our residents and visitors, particularly on Oahu. Your suggestions are part of this process.

Regarding contact tracing, these are the actions currently under way:

- Dr. Emily Roberson is newly leading the Disease Investigation Branch (DIB), reporting directly to me. While DIB will continue to benefit from the subject matter expertise of State Epidemiologist Dr. Sarah Park, this reorganization allows Dr. Roberson to focus closely on operational matters within DIB.
- National Guard resources have been brought on board and are actively functioning as contact tracers.
- The Department has hired and will continue to hire community clinicians who have completed the UH contact tracer training.
- The current path for volunteers to participate as contact tracers is through the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). We recommend that individuals associated with colleges, universities, or other health care systems interested in volunteering their services register with MRC. Additional options for volunteer participation are being investigated.

The National Guard is currently providing assistance that has enhanced the efficiency of our current systems. I am optimistic that with continued support from the National Guard and HIEMA and with my and Dr. Roberson's focus on data sharing and enhancing contact tracing, we will make rapid progress in these areas.

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki
August 16, 2020
Page 2

I thank you for bringing your insightful recommendations to our attention as we navigate these unprecedented events together as leaders in our State. In addition to information sharing and contact tracing, as you have emphasized, the everyday activities of each of our residents remain paramount to our success in controlling spread of this disease. I appreciate your continued support in sharing the messages to wear masks, keep distance, wash hands, avoid travel, and stay home when one is sick.

Together we can continue to protect our communities.

Sincerely,

Danette Wong Tomiyasu

Danette Wong Tomiyasu
Deputy Director for Health Resources