



## HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE OF HAWAII  
STATE CAPITOL  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

October 7, 2020

The Honorable Harry Kim  
Mayor, County of Hawai'i  
25 Aupuni Street  
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720

Dear Mayor Kim,

We are writing to you to express our concerns about your stated intent to opt out of the state's pre-travel testing program and leave the 14-day mandatory quarantine in place, effectively continuing a shutdown of tourism for Hawai'i Island. We support a secondary test requirement, as soon as it is feasible to implement. However, in the meantime, we urge the county to retain the October 15<sup>th</sup> start date for the pre-travel testing program, while simultaneously working towards standing up a program that includes post-arrival testing.

The pre-travel testing program has been discussed at length since last June, was repeatedly delayed, and then was finally scheduled to begin on October 15<sup>th</sup>, a date that was announced three weeks ago on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Given the amount of time that the County has had to consider and prepare for this, the eleventh-hour change of heart that was announced yesterday was unexpected. The tourism shutdown has already had devastating impacts on the local economy, which are compounded by the poor timing of this announcement. Cancellations of airline, hotel and activity reservations are already pouring in, and the reality is that our island businesses cannot to continue to weather this storm.

The health and safety of our residents must be the highest priority. However, using only closures and shutdowns each time there is an increase in cases is not an effective long-term strategy and is unsustainable. Other steps to manage this pandemic must be taken. Specifically, better communication with the public and increased efforts for enforcement of rules and guidelines, including the use of face masks and other public health

recommendations, are needed. With the vast majority of current cases on Hawai‘i Island coming from community spread of the virus, interaction with our own neighbors poses as great a risk as interaction with an incoming visitor who has received a negative test result 72 hours prior. It is far more important that efforts be made to enforce proper use of face masks, gathering limits, and other public health recommendations. If this is done with consistency and clarity, along with the state’s efforts to provide proactive contact tracing and robust testing, we believe visitors can safely return to our county without seeing the number of cases of COVID-19 spiral out of control.

We hope that you will reconsider your decision and allow the pre-travel testing program to begin as planned on October 15<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,

*Representative Nicole E. Lowen*  
*Representative Mark M. Nakashima*  
*Representative David A. Tarnas*  
*Representative Chris Todd*  
*Representative Richard H. K. Onishi*  
*Representative Joy A. San Buenaventura*

*Senator Dru Mamo Kanuha*  
*Senator Kaiali ‘i Kahele*  
*Senator Lorraine R. Inouye*

Cc: The Honorable Governor David Y. Ige, State of Hawai‘i