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July 2, 2020

Honorable David Ige
Governor
State of Hawaii
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: COVID-19 Testing

Aloha Governor Ige:

As an elected official, I am deeply troubled by the economic devastation that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused. It has hit the mainstay of our state's economy, our visitor industry, particularly hard. I appreciate your efforts to develop a plan to welcome visitors again starting on August 1, 2020. We all agree that the reopening should be done safely, affording maximum protection for our residents from this infectious virus. As you know, this is important not only from a public health standpoint, but also in order to market Hawai'i as a safe destination and to gain the acceptance and support from the people of Hawai'i to open our islands once again.

While I believe obtaining a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours prior to boarding is necessary to relax the mandatory 14-day quarantine for those who test negative, I am concerned this protocol could nevertheless result in a problematic increase in the number of coronavirus cases, unless additional safety precautions are implemented. It is of particular concern that incoming travelers will be arriving from numerous cities across the United States where coronavirus cases are spiking. It is also important to note that many of the visitors coming to Hawai'i will be clustered in resort areas where their hotel accommodations are located and where prevention precautions such as social distancing and wearing of face coverings are oftentimes not followed.

The implementation of the pre-boarding testing would not keep out many travelers who are

pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic for COVID-19 or who contract the virus after being tested prior to their arrival. These travelers would be able to enter our state and contribute to widespread community transmission of the virus. Moreover, a recent study by John Hopkins Medicine has shown that the diagnostic COVID-19 tests travelers would have to undergo prior to boarding could produce false negative results at a rate of at least 20 percent, depending on the time of testing. Consequently, there will be a number of passengers who obtain negative test results but who are, in fact, carriers of the virus. These scenarios were detailed in a brief, "Prevention of Travel-Related Reintroduction of COVID-19 Infection in the State of Hawaii," prepared by the University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO). These travelers could also infect other passengers traveling on the same flights and create a larger pool of contagious individuals who would circulate and spread the virus within the community after arrival. In addition, the thermal screening system scheduled to be installed at Hawai'i's airports by August 1, 2020, will not identify travelers who are asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic.

The UHERO brief points out that infections from out-of-state travelers can be kept at manageable levels if travelers follow "all standard COVID-19 prevention precautions" (e.g., wearing face masks in public) prior to boarding, in flight and upon and after arrival. However, it is unlikely all passengers will follow this protocol. Furthermore, if travelers are coming from states experiencing large numbers of COVID-19 cases, the volume of infected visitors entering Hawai'i could be much higher than projected.

Also of concern, once incoming travelers circulate in the community, the transmission of the virus can grow exponentially. For example, hotel guests who are carrying the virus will come into contact with other guests, hotel employees, other visitors, tourism industry workers, and residents while on sightseeing tours. The individuals with whom these visitors come into contact could in turn transmit the virus to others. The UHERO brief recognizes this problem and urges tracking of arriving passengers (including the use of phone apps) and the implementation of a surveillance program to monitor high-risk settings in the tourism industry. Such a surveillance program would include ongoing workplace testing for hotel employees and aggressive contact tracing.

In light of these concerns, I am requesting that your administration consider implementing the following additional safeguards before allowing passengers to bypass the mandatory quarantine:

- Require an incoming traveler with a negative pre-boarding test to undergo a second follow-up diagnostic viral test after arrival within seven days of the initial test in order to confirm whether or not the person is carrying the virus. This requirement would further reduce the risk of re-introduction and spread of the virus within the community. A number of medical providers in our community have been advocating for a second test.

- Consult with private laboratories already processing tests in Hawai'i with regard to significantly ramping up testing capacity. The state may consider various funding sources, including, but not limited to: fees charged to visitors, monies from the state general fund, transient accommodations tax revenues, surcharges on airline tickets and the sale of merchandise at Hawaii airports, and federal funding approved by the U.S. Congress for states and municipalities to expand testing capacity.
- Implement effective tracking and contact tracing of incoming passengers as recommended in the UHERO brief. In this regard, I am asking that the administration provide a detailed contact tracing plan to the public. I also agree with the UHERO brief recommendation that incoming travelers be asked to install phone apps to track and trace persons with whom an infected traveler has come into contact. A traveler who refuses to install the app would be required to quarantine.
- Develop a surveillance system to monitor high-risk settings in the tourism industry, testing employees with frequent contact with visitors. The UHERO brief recommends that workers with COVID-19 symptoms be offered testing, together with aggressive contact tracing and workplace testing.
- The administration should also ensure the state has the capabilities and resources in place to effectively enforce compliance by travelers, who have not undergone pre-boarding testing and must observe the mandatory 14-day self-quarantine. Strengthening our state's system of enforcement will be critical, given that a mandatory quarantine will be even more difficult to enforce as the number of passenger arrivals to Hawai'i increases significantly.
- Of critical importance, the administration must ensure the information about the pre-boarding test requirement is well publicized to alert the millions of out-of-state residents who will make plans to travel to Hawai'i. Otherwise, our state will be overwhelmed by the volume of visitors arriving at our airports who are unaware of the test requirement, and will be subject to the mandatory quarantine.

It is my position that unless all of the above safety precautions are implemented, the 14-day travel quarantine should continue to be mandatory for all incoming passengers. I believe that many of our constituents are deeply concerned that the reopening of tourism will significantly increase the number of coronavirus cases we have worked so hard to contain.

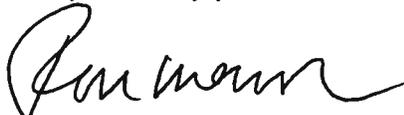
On May 20, 2020, Councilmember Tommy Waters and I wrote to legislative leaders about the need to implement a comprehensive testing and contact tracing program. On June 10, 2020, the Council's Select Committee on Economic Assistance and Revitalization approved Resolution

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20-141, CD1 urging the Governor and State Legislature to adopt and allocate funding for a plan to test incoming travelers to Hawai'i for COVID-19 including a second diagnostic viral test within seven days after the initial negative test.

I respectfully request your careful consideration of these proposals. Thank you for your attention to the above matters.

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Menor", written in a cursive style.

Ron Menor
Council Chair Emeritus

cc: Members of the Hawai'i State Senate
Members of the Hawai'i State House of Representatives
Mayor Kirk Caldwell