



August 25, 2020

THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS ADVISORY GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS

After multiple meetings and discussions with the community, the Honolulu City Council Select Committee on Economic Assistance and Revitalization (EAR) will consider Resolution 20-210 to adopt the first COVID-19 pandemic-related recommendations made by the committee's Stakeholder Advisory Group.

EAR Committee Chairman Tommy Waters appreciates and acknowledges the hard work by the members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group. Resolution 20-210 and other measures will be discussed by the EAR Committee at 2:30 tomorrow afternoon, August 26, inside Council Chambers at Honolulu Hale.

“For nearly two months, this Advisory Group has been working diligently to identify issues and areas where the City and County of Honolulu can take steps to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on residents’ lives,” said EAR Committee Chairman Waters. “The Advisory Group has submitted its first report, and the Council is ready to work collaboratively to implement those recommendations where feasible.”

The Advisory Group made seven specific proposals:

1. **The HUB Community Emergency Resource Centers (CERC)** – recommends that the City consider incorporating a disaster relief and response model for the HUB-CERC, in which recovery shelters and service centers are set up to provide clear, fast, fair, and effective short-term and long-term responses to individual and family needs in order to facilitate and accelerate the client’s return to the workforce.
2. **Use the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to Reconnect Unemployed to Health Care Coverage** – urges the City to actively assist laid-off and unemployed residents by fully utilizing the provision of the federal ACA that allows unemployed and separated workers to enroll immediately through the healthcare.gov portal for 60 days following their date of separation, which will allow them to access the federal subsidies available through the ACA to maintain their health care coverage for themselves and their families, rather than pursue the much more expensive COBRA option.
3. **Expand City’s CARES Act Funding to Oahu’s Small Business Community** – urges the City to consider expanding its breadth and reach into O‘ahu’s greater business community, which would include allowing businesses to apply for funds up to 3 separate occasions, and increasing the threshold for qualifying small businesses to \$3 million in sales and less than 100 employees.

4. **Retool and Retrain O’ahu’s Workforce** – recommends partnering with the University of Hawai’i Community Colleges to retool and retrain City residents to develop their skills and knowledge to be prepared for available jobs and to earn certificates valued by employers, especially for occupations which often have vacancies and in growing industries.
5. **Establish a Honolulu Entry Control Point (ECP)** – noting that Hawaii’s neighbor islands have limited resources to combat a major COVID-19 outbreak in their communities, the Advisory Group urges City and State officials to establish sole entry control point (ECP) for the entire State of Hawai’i at the Daniel K. Inouye International Airport during the initial phase of a planned and controlled reopening of the Hawaiian Islands to tourists, which would allow officials and personnel to closely screen, monitor and process all arriving (and departing) overseas passengers through a single port of entry instead of at five different airports across the state.
6. **Address Community Needs and Organizational Impacts via Nonprofit Agencies** – recommends that the City actively solicit proposals from nonprofit organizations across our island, encouraging them to first assess the present situation and immediate need in their respective communities during the present public health emergency, and then seek to address it proactively. The Advisory Group provided references to proposals from seven different nonprofit organizations.
7. **Prevent Unchecked and Persistent Spread of COVID-19 Virus in O’ahu’s Service-Resistant Homeless Population** – recommends increased funding for diversion and intervention programs, which assist with treatment of service resistant homeless individuals struggling with severe mental illness and drug addiction on the streets and in prisons; funding a voluntary medically-assisted treatment program for homeless individuals with addictions who have ended up in O’ahu correctional facilities; creating an online Homeless Service Portal to coordinate homeless outreach and response effort across O’ahu; purchasing wheelchair-accessible transport vehicles; and retrofitting temporary assessment and quarantine quarters for homeless individuals at places such as Leahi Hospital.

Persons wishing to submit oral testimony may do so remotely at the Mission Memorial Auditorium (530 S. King Street). Testifiers are requested to register online by 2:30 p.m. at <http://www.honolulu.gov/ccl-testimony-form.html>. Those wishing to testify online may do so by logging in at www.webex.com and click “Join,” enter meeting number **1460011407**, and complete the registration process.

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