

Aloha e Friends,

Good News! Mayor Blangiardi announced on February 23 that Governor David Ige approved the City and County of Honolulu’s Order Implementing [Tier 3 of Honolulu’s COVID-19 Reopening Framework](#), which began at 12:01 am on February 25. Tier 3 allows some of the following activities and operations:

- ◆ [Restaurants](#): groups of 10 people allowed regardless of household/living unit, and the capacity limit of 50% of legal occupancy is eliminated
- ◆ [Social gatherings](#) of up to 10 people allowed

- ◆ [Shooting and Archery ranges](#) are allowed to have groups up to 10 people
- ◆ [Retail and Service businesses groups](#) up to 10 allowed, and the capacity limit of 50% of legal occupancy is eliminated
- ◆ [Spiritual Services](#) groups up to 10 allowed, and the capacity limit of 50% of legal occupancy is eliminated
- ◆ [Funerals](#) will be allowed to operate with up to 25 people
- ◆ [Gyms and Fitness Facilities](#) allowed to operate indoors at 50% capacity
- ◆ [Indoor group physical activity classes](#) allowed with no more than 10 people
- ◆ [Commercial Recreational Boating](#) allowed with 50% capacity

As always, please contact me at (808) 586-6830 or sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on Twitter [@senmikegabbard](https://twitter.com/senmikegabbard), Instagram [@GabbardAloha](https://www.instagram.com/GabbardAloha), or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/senmikegabbard>.

Best wishes to you and your ‘ohana.

Me ke aloha pumehana,




COMMITTEE CHAIR

AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Government Operations

DISTRICT 20

- ◆ Kapolei, Makakilo and portions of Ewa, Kalaeloa and Waipahu

Listen-Story Meeting

You’re invited to join my Virtual Listen Story community meeting on Saturday, March 20 from 9-10am. A reminder to my constituent email list will be sent out closer to the date. If you want to be added to the invite list, email sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov and I’ll send you the Zoom link.

Key Agriculture Bills

As the Agriculture and Environment Committee Chair, I scheduled [75 bills for a hearing and passed out 70](#) by the First Lateral filing deadline on February 18. Of those 70 that passed the committee, 47 are related to agriculture. The [First Lateral deadline](#) refers to the point during the session when a bill needs to have passed the first committee and now moves on to the second committee for consideration. Our next big deadline will be when the agriculture bills have passed the Second Committee on the referral, which is either Ways and Means, Judiciary, or Commerce and Consumer Protection. The deadline for those bills to have passed those committees is March 5. Here are a few key agriculture bills that I authored that are still alive: (Continued p. 2)



[Agriculture Loan Program \(SB 336\)](#)

This bill would streamline the process for smaller agricultural loans. The current law hasn't been updated since the 1980s and the Department of Agriculture wants to amend



the law to meet the needs of 21st century farmers. It would facilitate being able to give out loans in times of emergency in a quick manner. Right now, agricultural loans \$25,000 or more are

subject to the Board of Agriculture meeting process and approval. This bill would increase that threshold to \$50,000 and allow loans up to this amount to be approved by the Director of HDOA without Board input.

[Important Agricultural Lands Tax Credit \(SB 339\)](#)



The Important Agricultural Lands (IAL) Tax Credit was established in 2008. The IAL Tax Credit supports food self-sufficiency by providing tax credits to qualified landowners and farmers to help offset costs related to establishing and sustaining viable agriculture operations. This bill would extend the IAL tax credit to 2030. The tax credit wouldn't be able to be taken until 3 years after the tax credit is applied for, because of the COVID economic situation.

[Agribusiness Development Corporation \(SB 335\)](#)

The Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC) was established in 1994, to address the issues of large tracts of land becoming available due to the downsizing of the sugar and pineapple industries. An audit released on January 14 indicated that ADC has failed to fulfill its duty. This bill would require ADC to focus more on food production and to submit reports to the Legislature on their leasing. During our AEN/EET hearing on February 12, we added additional amendments suggested by the Center for Food Safety to include more representation from local farmers' or ranchers' associations to the ADC Board and to require ADC to comply with the Sunshine Law. Taken together, these changes would move ADC in the right direction.

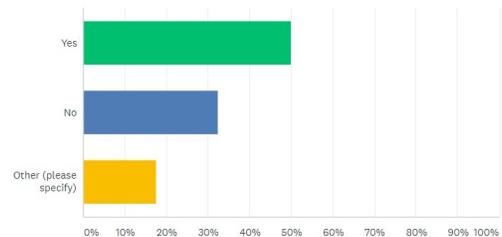
Community Survey Results

In my [February newsletter](#), I included a short survey and invited your input on three issues facing the Legislature. Here are the questions and the results I received out of 44 responses. Mahalo to everyone who weighed in.

1. Do you plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes widely available? 50% said Yes, 32.5% said No, and 17.5% were undecided

Do you plan to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes widely available?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	50.00% 20
No	32.50% 14
Other (please specify)	Responses 17.50% 7

2. Do you support or oppose the legalization of recreational cannabis? 52.5% in support and 47.5% opposed
3. Do you support or oppose the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands plans to construct a casino in Kapolei near the Ka Makana Ali'i Mall? 25% approved of this proposal with 75% a definite No

COVID-19 Hotlines

Here are some helpful contacts for COVID-19-related issues that you may need assistance on:



- **Travel Related Questions:** For travel related questions, call 1-800-GoHawaii (1-800-464-2924)
- **2-1-1 Statewide Hotline:** For information and referrals to food banks, health services and other resources, dial 2-1-1 or text (877) 275-6569. Hawai'i residents can reach out 7:00am to 10:00pm, 7 days a week.
- **Hawai'i Cares Hotline:** For crisis support, mental health resources, and isolation & quarantine assistance, call 1-800-753-6879 or text "ALOHA" TO 741741.
- **City & County of Honolulu: Honolulu**
 - ⇒ COVID-19 webpage: oneoahu.org
 - ⇒ To report violators: call 808-723-3900 or email HPDcovidenforce@honolulu.gov

Academy for Creative Media at UH West O'ahu to Open Fall 2021



The [Academy for Creative Media Facility at UH West O'ahu](#) will welcome students to its new Creative Media Facility for the fall 2021 semester. The 33,000-square-foot, high-tech building features a Dolby Atmos 100-seat screening room and mixing stage, e-sports arena, post-production suites, an emerging media lab, incubator space, and industry-standard sound stage. With the opening of this facility, students from all over the state, especially from the westside, will be able to study an array of topics such as video, animation, video games, design, social media, web and app development, virtual and augmented reality. I continue to support UHWO for their commitment to supporting local, underserved families from the westside and their commitment to providing opportunities with the film industry, a growing sector of our economy.

Farrington Highway Improvements Update

I was stoked to receive [notification from Governor Ige](#) on January 20 that he had released \$100 million to finance the design and construction for widening Farrington Highway from Kapolei Golf Course to Fort Weaver Road. The improvements include widening the road to 4 lanes, new sidewalks, bike lanes, a 44-ft. landscaped median strip, new bridges, culverts, and major utility relocation. Construction is planned to begin by May 2021. Mahalo to the Gov for looking out for Kapolei and Ewa!



Honoring O'ahu MVP for Invasive Species Awareness Month

February was Hawai'i Invasive Species Awareness Month. During this month, the Hawai'i Invasive Species Council (HISC) works to bring attention to the problems invasive species cause in our islands. Each year, as the Agriculture and Environment Committee Chair, I participate in honoring people and organizations that have done an outstanding job in the invasive species fight over the preceding year. This

year I [presented HISC's 2021 O'ahu MVP award to Kyoko Johnson with Conservation Dogs of Hawai'i](#). Kyoko and her team are dedicated to supporting efforts to suppress the expansion of devil weed on O'ahu by assisting with early detection and removal projects. Devil weed is an invasive plant spreading on O'ahu that is very difficult to control. Finding new populations of devil weed early is critical to controlling its spread. The method that Kyoko and her team use is innovative. They use trained conservation dogs that are familiar with the scent of devil weed in order to find this invasive plant. [According to their website, these dog teams have found and removed over 500 devil weed plants](#). Kyoko and her team utilize volunteer dog owners in their searches, which is an opportunity for more members of the community to learn about invasive plants. All findings get reported to the [O'ahu Invasive Species Committee, or OISC](#). In addition to seeing the dogs as a way to find more invasive plants, OISC says the dogs make great, four-legged conservation mascots that get people excited about the fight against this invasive weed. Kyoko and Conservation Dogs of Hawai'i were nominated by the OISC, a project of the UH Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit. Congratulations to Kyoko, her team, and to all the dogs!

Federal Communication Commission's Lifeline Program

You, your friends, or family may qualify for low-cost internet service and discounts in Hawai'i.

The FCC's Lifeline program provides discounts on phone and broadband service from participating providers for qualifying low-income consumers. To be eligible, an applicant must have a household income level at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or receive benefits from one of the following federal assistance programs:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Medicaid
- Federal Public Housing Assistance
- Tribal-specific programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribally-Administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TTANF), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Head Start
- Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit Programs

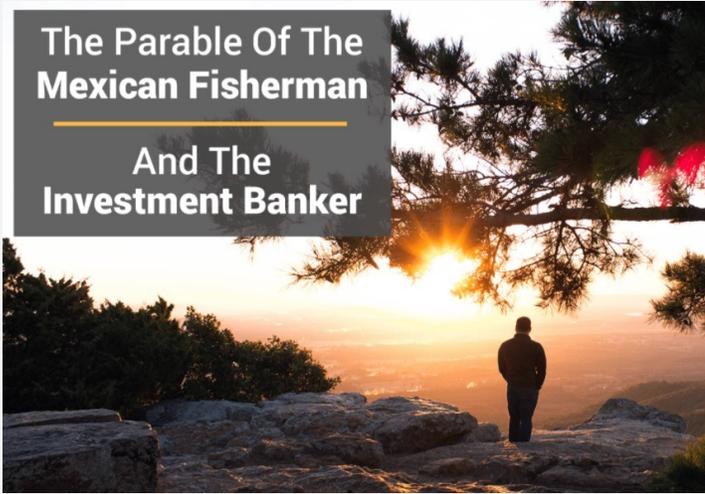
For more information and to apply for the Lifeline program, visit

- <https://www.fcc.gov/general/lifeline-program-low-income-consumers>

MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION

The Senate allows each Senator to offer a [Moment of Contemplation \(MOC\)](#) at least twice during our legislative session. This occurs before the beginning of each floor session and gives each Senator the chance to share “food for thought” for their colleagues. Senators can also invite guests to offer the MOC on their behalf. Here’s the text of the MOC I gave on February 1, that I hope you’ll enjoy reading:

The Parable Of The Mexican Fisherman And The Investment Banker



Mr. Prez, colleagues, staff, and guests: Aloha mai kakou. Not 100% sure but this is possibly from a short story by a German author. It’s called the “Mexican Fisherman and the American Investment Banker.”

An American investment banker was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellowfin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “Only a little while.”

The American then asked why didn’t he stay out longer and catch more fish?

The Mexican said he had enough to support his family’s immediate needs.

The American then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siestas with my wife, Maria, and stroll into the village each evening where I sip

wine, and play guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life.”

The American scoffed. “I have an MBA from Harvard, and I can help you,” he said. “You should spend more time fishing, and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat, you could buy several boats, and eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman, you could sell directly to the processor, eventually opening up your own cannery. You could control the product, processing, and distribution,” he said. “Of course, you would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then Los Angeles, and eventually to New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But, how long will this all take?” To which the American replied, “Oh, 15 to 20 years or so.”

“But what then?” asked the Mexican.

The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time was right, you would announce an IPO, and sell your company stock to the public and become very rich. You would make millions!”

The Mexican said, “Millions – then what?”

The American said, “Then you could retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siestas with your wife, and stroll to the village in the evenings where you could sip wine and play guitar with your amigos.”

Mahalo. Ke Akua me ke aloha!

