

*Aloha e Friends,*

This has been a surreal and difficult time for all of us over the past several weeks dealing with the threat of COVID-19 and the stay-at-home/work-from-home orders. Since March 1, close to 224,000 people have filed unemployment benefit applications in our state. Thousands have had to wait weeks to get signed-up and receive their unemployment benefits. The State Senate and State House have stepped up with volunteers to help staff an unemployment benefit call-center at the Convention Center. One of my session legislative aides, Tonya Miller, has been helping with that effort. These volunteers have ramped up and are now helping to process 10,000 unemployment claims a day.

## COMMITTEE CHAIR

### AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

#### MEMBER

- ◆ Judiciary
- ◆ Labor, Culture & the Arts

#### DISTRICT 20

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

To file for unemployment, please use the Department of Labor and Industrial Relation's website: <https://labor.hawaii.gov/>.

As our COVID-19 infection numbers hopefully go down because of "social distancing" policies in place, new information will continue to come out. In order to get the latest detailed facts, I encourage you to tune in and access the information available online from the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 here: <https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/>.

May 10 is Mother's Day and the good news is that florists can reopen on May 1. So, yay, we'll be able to send mom flowers!

As always, please contact me at [sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov](mailto:sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov) or 808-586-6830 or if I can help you or your family in any way. You can also follow me on [Twitter](#) @senmikegabbard, [Instagram](#) @sengabbard or [Facebook](#) /senmikegabbard.

## \*\*\*CORONAVIRUS UPDATES AND HELPFUL TIPS\*\*\*

### Stay-at-Home Order Extended Until May 31

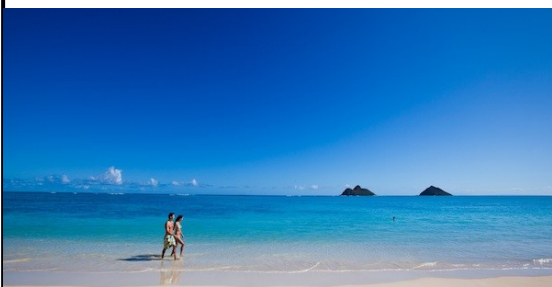
Governor Ige announced on April 25 that he had issued an emergency proclamation to extend the stay-at-home order until May 31. Here are the details:

- ◆ Residents may leave their homes only for various essential needs, including healthcare, purchasing food, medicine, gasoline, taking care of the elderly, minors, or those with disabilities, returning to a place of residence

outside of Hawai'i, picking up educational materials for distance learning, receiving meals or other

related services.

- ◆ Outdoor exercise is also permitted – including swimming, surfing and walking pets.
- ◆ In addition, running, jogging or walking on the beach will be permitted, as long as social distancing requirements are observed.
- ◆ Also extended through the end of May -- the 14-day quarantine for both visitors and residents entering the state and for inter-island travelers.
- ◆ The eviction moratorium, which prevents any eviction from a residential dwelling for failure to pay rent, also remains in effect through May 31.
- ◆ In addition, social distancing requirements remain in place across the state through the end of May.



# COVID-19

## City Parks Open on Limited Basis

Mayor Kirk Caldwell announced on April 22 that City Parks will reopen on a limited basis during the COVID-19 crisis.

People can now use the parks for these reasons:

- ◆ Engaging in outdoor individual activities of walking, running/jogging, and biking on roads and pathways
- ◆ Using open comfort stations/showers
- ◆ Accessing designated community garden plots
- ◆ Traversing City Parks to engage in and return from ocean activities, such as surfing, solo paddling, and swimming

This is a welcome relief, because we all need to get our exercise during this very stressful time.

## Touch 'N Go in Kalaeloa to Remain Open

There's been much concern from veterans in our community about the potential closure of the NEX Touch 'N Go in Kalaeloa. This would have been in addition to the unfortunate closure of Tamura's Market in Kalaeloa in April. I was stoked to learn that NEX signed a long-term lease with Hunt Development Group on April 20. This ensures that military families in the Kapolei area will continue to have this convenient NEX facility near-by. Mahalo to the Navy and Hunt for being able to sit down and come up with this lease agreement.

## Grab-And-Go Meals for Students

The state Department of Education is partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Hawai'i Child Nutrition Program to provide free grab-and-go meals for students during the COVID-19 crisis. Schools will be providing breakfast and lunch free of charge to children under 18 years old. The breakfast service hours are from 7:30am-8am and lunch is from 11:30am-12pm Mondays thru Fridays, excluding holidays. Here are the participating schools in Senate District 20: [Barbers Point Elementary](#) and [Kapolei High](#).

## Free, Nutritious Meals for Homesteaders

Kapolei Community Development Corporation and Kapolei Homesteads Associations are partnering with Alu Like, Inc., Kamehameha Schools, and the Kroc Center Hawai'i to provide over 2,300 free, nutritious meals weekly to those of Native Hawaiian ancestry who are 60 years and older. In order to qualify, you'll need proof of age, ethnicity, and a birth certificate. For more information contact Alu Like, Inc. at [info@alulike.org](mailto:info@alulike.org). You can also reach out directly to the individual Kapolei homesteads if you are a member of one of those communities. Here's the contact info:

- ◆ **Malu'ohai** - Homelani Schaedel - (808) 520-2267
- ◆ **Kaupe'a** - Michelle Kauhane - (808) 630-0501 and Iwalani McBrayer - (808) 979-1455
- ◆ **Kānehili** - Randy Akau - (808) 620-9169, Email: [kanehiliCA@gmail.com](mailto:kanehiliCA@gmail.com)
- ◆ **Kauluokaha'i** - Helen N. Wai - (808) 479-2330

## Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act

The Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act become law on April 24. This legislation provides \$310 billion in additional Paycheck Protection Program funds to assist our small businesses in remaining open. The bill includes \$50 billion for the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program and clarifies that small farms are eligible for this funding. Additionally, the legislation provides \$75 billion in funding to support hospitals and health care workers with personal protective equipment and COVID-19 testing.

## Early Learning Resources and Child Care Subsidies

The state Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL) has created a new website that provides COVID-19 resources for families with young children. The website includes sections on available care, subsidy and scholarship information, other resources for those in need, at-home resources for families, resources for child care providers, and supply donations.

You can access it here: <https://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/>. It's important to point out that EOEL and the state Department of Human Services have been able to partner to provide child care assistance for families during the COVID-19 crisis. Our state has temporarily changed its rules for child care subsidies that make many more families eligible. You can find more information about applying at Child Care

## Funding for Local and Regional Food Producers

On April 24, I joined with 128 state legislators from 34 states to send a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue requesting the U.S. Department of Agriculture ensure that Hawai'i local food producers have equal access to federal stimulus funding. Congress gave little guidance for how the CARES Act appropriation of \$9.5 billion to support local food production should be spent. Meanwhile, many of our food producers selling into the local economy operate outside the traditional scope of many USDA programs and have suffered significant revenue losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to urging Secretary Perdue to allow states to address the unique needs of their food communities through the use of block grants, the letter supported the recommendations of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) to:

- ◆ Ensure that aid to local and regional food system producers is commensurate with expected losses of more than \$1 billion;
- ◆ Invest in and offer support to market development designed to foster the stabilization, growth and increased sustainability of the production of food for local and regional consumption;

- ◆ Prioritize small- and mid-sized farms that sell directly into local and regional markets, with special attention to farmers historically underserved by USDA;
- ◆ Provide funds directly to producers, including livestock contract growers, and not to integrators, packers or processors likely to be eligible for aid through other programs;
- ◆ Ensure that information about applying for aid is readily accessible, provided in multiple languages and formats, and that assistance for applicants with limited English proficiency is readily available;
- ◆ Not limit aid to farmers that are already participating in federal programs; farms should not be required to have an FSA number in order to receive aid;
- ◆ Provide outreach to farmers about aid opportunities that is thorough and robust, including outreach to urban farmers, indigenous farmers, Black farmers, minority farmers, very small and limited-resource farmers, and farmers with limited English proficiency;
- ◆ Guarantee that the Inspector General has all of the information to ensure a timely and robust audit of the implementation of the agricultural provisions in the CARES Act.



## A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE THE NEW NORMAL

### Check out "A Climate for Change: The New Normal"

April 22 was the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day! This day is always a good time to reflect on the existing threats to our natural environment and to resolve to do our part as individuals and a community to make a positive difference. Anthony Aalto and Mike Hinchey of Green Island Films launched the first program of a 3-part documentary called

"A Climate for Change: The New Normal" on this year's Earth Day. The first episode, which aired on Hawai'i News Now features UH Geography professor, Dr. Camilo Mora, and his Hawai'i Carbon Neutral plan to plant 1 million trees. Check out the first episode on KGMB on May 3 from 10:30-11:30pm and May 9 from 6pm-7pm. The second episode of the documentary will be on plastics, albatross preservation, coral reefs, and personal consumption reduction. The third episode will focus on plant-based food issues. The 2nd and 3rd episode air dates have yet to be announced.





## Farm to Car Program

Last month, the Hawai'i Farm Bureau launched the Farm to Car program to connect farmers with consumers. The Farm to Car program has been successful and is basically a drive-thru Farmers' Market at the Blaisdell Center. Their online marketplace is open on Sundays and Thursdays at noon and they can accommodate up to 300 orders on each of those days. Minimum orders are \$25 and there's a \$3 processing fee per order. The orders are available for pick-up from 9am-12pm on Wednesdays (for Thursday orders) and Saturdays (for Sunday orders) at the Blaisdell Center along Ward Center, next to the Box Office (777 Ward Avenue). Please visit their website to place your order: <https://hfbf.org/farm-to-car/> and call 476-0539 with any questions. Mahalo for the Farm Bureau for working so hard to help our farmers get through this difficult time!

## Opposing Proposed Changes to the National Environmental Policy Act Review Process

NEPA



I joined with state legislators across the nation in writing a letter to Mary Neumayr, Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), in response to the CEQ's proposal to amend the regulations for implementing the procedural

provisions for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). I believe the proposed changes by CEQ to NEPA would stifle both public input and science-based decision making in the federal environmental review process. They would put industry and developer interests before public health and

safety, and before the health of our natural environment. State and local governments are already shouldering huge fiscal and human costs of environmental damages and will be forced to shoulder increasing costs in decades to come. Ignoring the significant role that federal agencies have in mitigating these impacts through the NEPA process is counterproductive to the state-federal partnership and dangerous to the well-being of the public. The proposed deadline changes for the preparation of Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements will also make it difficult for states to participate effectively in NEPA processes, as it could take multiple years of data collection to understand long term impacts. This will not only hurt the outcome of the NEPA process and state citizens, it will also directly limit a state's ability to effectively participate in the review process. I urge CEQ to withdraw the National Environmental Policy Act Review Process and retain the existing NEPA implementing regulations that have effectively served the nation for more than 40 years. CEQ should instead work to increase funding and training for staff across federal agencies responsible for NEPA compliance. The single most important key to efficient and effective NEPA reviews is competent, trained, and adequate staff to implement the regulations.



**Senator Gabbard plants kale in his family Lanakila (Victory) garden.**