



May 7, 2020

RE: Agenda Item V. Presentation on potential impact of COVID-19 on state funds for education; potential priorities for federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Acts ("CARES Act") K-12 funding for summer months and 2020-2021 school year; and initial planning process

Dear Chair Payne and Members of the Board,

On April 27, 2020 HE'E Coalition wrote a letter to the Superintendent entitled Six Questions, Six Specific Proposed Actions, after weeks of meeting with DOE staff and getting little clarity on the true situation of what was going on in our schools. The Superintendent responded to our letter on April 29, 2020.¹

These are unprecedented times and the Superintendent eloquently wrote about the efforts that schools have made to deal with COVID-19 and subsequent school closures, and we greatly appreciate these efforts. However, we still do not have the clarity and transparency regarding the condition of our students statewide, and what plans are being made to prepare for the reopening of schools. According to the Superintendent's response to our Congressional Delegation, "HIDOE does not have a centralized database where educators are logging in their interactions with students; however, individual schools maintain this information on each student." If DOE leadership is not taking a system-wide view, how then can a systemwide budget be created? How will DOE as a system know where to allocate funds to where the greatest needs are?

In the same way our leaders have used data and facts to develop and execute an effective response to COVID-19, we ask the BOE to urge the DOE to use data and facts to develop and execute a plan that will effectively educate our students in these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director

¹ Attached are April 27, 2020 HE'E Letter to the Superintendent, Six Questions, Six Specific Proposed Suggestions, and the April 29, 2020 Superintendent Response to the HE'E Letter. Included in the HE'E Letter is the April 18, 2020 Congressional Delegation Letter to the Superintendent. Attached as reference is the April 27, 2020 Response from the Superintendent to the Congressional Delegation Letter.

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

Academy 21

After-School All-Stars Hawai'i

Alliance for Place Based Learning

American Civil Liberties Union

*Castle Complex Community Council

*Castle-Kahuku Principal and CAS

*Education Institute of Hawai'i

*Faith Action for Community Equity

Fresh Leadership LLC

Girl Scouts Hawai'i

Harold K.L. Castle Foundation

*HawaiiKidsCAN

*Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance

*Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice

*Hawai'i Association of School Psychologists

Hawai'i Athletic League of Scholars

*Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Education Association

Hawai'i Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition

* Hawai'i State PTSA

Hawai'i State Student Council

Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Hawai'i P-20

Hawai'i 3Rs

Head Start Collaboration Office

It's All About Kids

*INPEACE

Joint Venture Education Forum

Junior Achievement of Hawaii

Kamehameha Schools

Kanu Hawai'i

*Kaua'i Ho'okele Council

Keiki to Career Kaua'i

Kupu A'e

*Leaders for the Next Generation

Learning First

McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds

Native Hawaiian Education Council

Our Public School

*Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

*Parents and Children Together

*Parents for Public Schools Hawai'i

Punahou School PUEO Program

*Teach for America

The Learning Coalition

US PACOM

University of Hawai'i College of Education

YMCA of Honolulu

Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on action items while individual and non-voting participants may collaborate on all efforts within the coalition.*



April 27, 2020

Via Email and USPS

Dr. Christina Kishimoto
Superintendent
P.O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: Six Questions, Six Specific Proposed Actions

Dear Dr. Kishimoto,

For the last several weeks HE'E Coalition and educational equity community advocates have dialogued with Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) staff to gain clarity on education issues related to the COVID-19 crisis. We have repeatedly posed reasonable, logical questions that focus on documenting what is happening in all our public schools, communications with students and families, and holding our system accountable. This is basic information that the HIDOE should have to address the current situation and plans for the next school sessions.

1. When will the HIDOE collect and share data on whether or not students are emotionally and physically safe, have access to devices and the internet, and are educationally engaged?
2. When will the HIDOE collect and share data examining what students are accessing the Meal-to-Go program and going forward, a plan to distribute food at all schools?
3. There is widespread misunderstanding and concern among parents and community members about what is happening in the HIDOE. Can you provide us with a written approved mechanism for interactive communication so that community members can be heard and get answers to their questions?
4. How will HIDOE determine which students are meeting academic standards without the Smarter Balanced and KAEO assessments and class grades? What is the plan for those students (including special education students) that are behind grade level?
5. Why isn't there an expectation or written policy that schools check in with all students (using mail, phones, computers, etc.) and set a daily schedule for subjects and assignments?
6. What is the plan for utilizing the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (\$43.4mm) and the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund? (\$9.7mm)?

The answers we have received from HIDOE staff are not coming with any clarity or detail. We are left with the strong impression that the HIDOE and Hawai'i Board of Education (BOE) do not have in place a clear policy approach to the spring semester. There are no systemwide expectations for what schools or teachers are supposed to be doing during this period of on-line learning and engagement. There are vague terms such as "enrichment." There have been open declarations that HIDOE is not going to be specific in requirements or even guidelines for every school or teacher or student.

As for the fall semester, you have stated publicly that the HIDOE is only focusing on summer school, and that detailed contingency policies and plans for the fall are not a high priority. We have seen no proposed budget or plans for bulk purchases of computers or tablets to connect students to their learning centers. We have seen no detailed scheduling of professional development for on-line or other distance learning instruction, especially social emotional learning (SEL) instruction for students who are in traumatic environments. We have seen no attempt to convert safer spaces for student to gather in, such as the convention center, where the environment can be more strictly controlled, with larger spaces between students and teachers. We have seen no attempts to convert buses or vans into travelling "hot spots" for students to download assignments, or even park nearby and do their work online.

The perception of lack of clarity and specific planning appears to be shared by our Congressional Delegation.

We offer a list of suggested actions that could assist in getting clarity of the current situation and written transparent plans for the summer school and the fall semester.

1. With nearly half of all HIDOE employees working outside of the classroom, create and post a written plan to repurpose these staff for ongoing communication, technology and health assessments of public-school students.
2. Survey each school to understand what each school and each teacher within each school has done during this semester to communicate daily with each student. This will tell us if there are gaps, especially in terms of regions or communities.
3. Determine, in time for legislative action, which students do not have internet connectivity and devices to learn online, and the budget that will be needed to accomplish this. If there are methods of delivering education other than internet connectivity and devices, clearly explain why and the budget needed to accomplish this.
4. Open libraries with internet access (using safe spacing) and convert buses and other vehicles into mobile "hot spots" to facilitate access for students whose homes do not have adequate connectivity.
5. Survey and collect data *this month* to document how each complex, school and student is operating with the maximum quality learning experiences for all

students. Create separate elementary, middle and high school charts and graphs to illustrate the patterns of academic strategies.

6. Incorporate best practices from other public and private education systems, determine the need for elementary, middle and high school professional development in a transition to hybrid or online learning to address academic and social emotional learning needs and plan the budget that will be requested for this.

As an education community, we are asking these questions and giving these suggestions out of a collective concern for our education system now and as we recover from this crisis. We look forward to receiving answers to our questions.

Sincerely,



Cheri Nakamura
HE'E Coalition Director

Encl: Letter from Congressional Delegation dated April, 18, 2020

cc: Via Email and USPS
Hawai'i Board of Education
Brian Schatz, United States Senator
Mazie Hirono, United States Senator
Tulsi Gabbard, Member of Congress
Ed Case, Member of Congress

HE'E Coalition Members and Participants

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Voting Members () Voting member organizations vote on
action items while individual and non-voting participants
may collaborate on all efforts within the coalition.*

Individual Support

William "Pila" Wilson

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 18, 2020

Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent
Hawaii Department of Education
P.O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

Dear Dr. Kishimoto,

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has upended the school year for thousands of students across the state. However, even as we take the necessary steps to mitigate the spread of the virus, educating Hawaii's children remains a top priority during this public health crisis. We are committed to supporting Hawaii's children and the Hawaii Department of Education (HIDOE) during this pandemic, and to working closely with HIDOE to make sure federal assistance supports the needs of those who have been affected. As Congress works on new legislation, we request your assistance by providing us with information about the HIDOE's ability to continue providing education to our students and recommendations for how we can support the Department's continued efforts to provide communities with educational and related services.

As part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Congress appropriated over \$30 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF), with over \$13 billion specifically for elementary and secondary schools. The HIDOE is expected to receive over \$43 million from the ESF. These funds are available to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by providing each school with the necessary resources to implement effective distance learning, including through the purchase of education technology and training teachers to adapt to nontraditional classrooms.

As the Congress works on the next bill to assist elementary and secondary schools in responding to this public health crisis, additional data from HIDOE would help to direct resources or ensure flexibilities in federal law. For that purpose, please provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) Across the state, how many public elementary and secondary students are receiving some kind of consistent education every day? How many students are not receiving this level of education?
- 2) How are public schools collecting information about the needs of students and their families and the ability to engage in distance learning? How many students (and their families) lack consistent internet access? How are schools providing educational material to those students (including laptop computers, instructional packets, and other materials), and what federal resources and flexibilities do you think would be helpful to improve the distance learning experience for students?

- 3) How many public schools are providing some kind of education? For schools that may not be able to provide distance learning, if any, how is HIDOE directing resources and guidance to those schools?
- 4) What is your expectation for how often a student connects with an educator? Are there data systems where you are logging these interactions, and, if not, then what federal resources would be helpful to make sure students are connecting with educators? How are non-classroom teachers being used to promote learning?
- 5) How many public schools are going beyond enrichment to provide some kind of education? For schools that may not be able to provide distance learning, if any, how is HIDOE directing resources and guidance to those schools?
- 6) Are there any other school districts across the country that offer effective models and best practices?
- 7) What offices within HIDOE are developing and implementing COVID-19 related guidance? What can we do to support HIDOE and these offices moving forward?

On April 17, 2020, HIDOE announced that it will maintain continuity of learning—providing distance learning and educational packets for public and charter school students—through May 28, 2020, which is the end of the 2019-2020 academic year. Planning for summer learning programs and the 2020-2021 academic year is of paramount importance for families across the state. However, the COVID-19 pandemic does not have a clear endpoint and cases could reemerge even with preventative measures. For that reason, HIDOE should be prepared for a disrupted 2020-2021 academic year.

It is imperative that we serve the students of Hawaii well by continuing to provide the best education possible while we mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please provide regular updates on HIDOE's efforts to develop and execute plans for educating students through the summer and 2020-2021 academic year if the pandemic continues or resurges and specifically how you are using the additional flexibilities in U.S. Department of Education federal title funds to support students farthest from opportunity. We are committed to working with you to ensure that this pandemic does not result in lower educational outcomes for Hawaii's youth.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senator



TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress



ED CASE
Member of Congress



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

April 27, 2020

The Honorable Senator Brian Schatz
United States Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mazie Hirono
United States Senate
713 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ed Case
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tulsi Gabbard
United States House of Representatives
1433 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Aloha Members of Hawaii's Congressional Delegation,

Thank you for your letter dated April 18, 2020 regarding the Hawaii State Department of Education's (HIDOE) response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please find our responses to each question below. I appreciate the phone calls that I have been able to have with each of you concerning our education transition priorities, funding needs and planning processes focused on protecting and advancing a quality instructional design for our haumana during this pandemic period and beyond. Thank you for your continued support of Hawaii's public education system.

- 1. Across the state, how many public elementary and secondary students are receiving some kind of consistent education every day? How many students are not receiving this level of education?**

HIDOE services approximately 180,000 students in 256 public schools and 37 public charter schools. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HIDOE's intent has always been to provide all students with regular access to educational material for the remainder of the school year to the extent possible. The HIDOE continues to strive to provide equal access for all of its students, but acknowledges certain limitations beyond our control that disproportionately affect our most vulnerable populations.

We are currently working to ascertain the exact number of students that are not receiving educational services, but can report that approximately 80%-95% of our student population are receiving consistent access to educational material depending on the school.

AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

While we are still determining the number of students by gathering data by Complex Area and school, we do know that many of these students are amongst our most vulnerable populations and we need to continue to diversify our approach to reach them. Currently, the HIDOE has Homeless Liaisons, English Learner teachers, and Special Education providers reaching out to students. School counselors also connected with students during this unprecedented time. The addition of an HIDOE telehealth hotline that will be in place later this week, will organize our Hawaii Keiki Nurses, a partnership with UH's School of Nursing, and our DOE school counselors, psychologists, and social workers in a triage approach that we hope will engage and capture more students from families who are overwhelmed with medical, psychological and social network needs, and thus may not be engaging in academics.

2. How are public schools collecting information about the needs of students and their families and the ability to engage in distance learning? How many students (and their families) lack consistent internet access? How are schools providing educational material to those students (including laptop computers, instructional packets, and other materials), and what federal resources and flexibilities do you think would be helpful to improve the distance learning experience for students?

As previously mentioned, limitations beyond the HIDOE's control prevent some students from accessing educational material or services. In light of these challenges, teachers have done a tremendous job in regularly connecting with their students to provide learning opportunities and to also check on their well-being and the welfare of their families. Teachers are able to assess their students' ability to engage in distance learning – whether it is digitally or via instructional packets. This comprehensive student information is compiled by teachers and reported to the principal at their respective school.

A perennial challenge in effectively implementing distance learning is providing enhanced learning activities for students in remote areas. The HIDOE is currently able to provide devices to our students, but is unable to guarantee connectivity for online access. The number of students not receiving regular access to educational material closely correlates with the number of students lacking internet access. Please note though, that at some schools where connectivity is a challenge in the community, the teachers have created a system for loading a computer device with curricular materials, with a refresh every couple of weeks.

While achieving online access for all students remains the HIDOE's optimal goal, we have had to pursue creative ways to address this ongoing inequity issue beyond our packet-distribution and electronic device provision efforts. One successful alternative has

been the establishment of partnerships with PBS Hawaii, Olelo Community Television, and Kamehameha Schools to employ educational broadcasting to provide students without internet access with supplemental learning activities through television. HIDOE continues to listen to those on the front lines of servicing our students at the school-level in adjusting and innovating the methods of how we connect with all students.

Internet platforms continue to be the most efficient and effective methods of distance learning implementation. As such, we will continue to work with and rely on our federal governmental partners in the ongoing quest to improve internet infrastructure to ensure access for all students. Funding through the recently passed Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) are examples of federal resources that the HIDOE will leverage to provide better internet access to students, particularly those who live in our remote areas. These sources will allow the HIDOE to purchase and distribute instruments such as mobile wifi hubs, while looking at innovative methods such as digital buses that can be physically posted in rural areas for our students. The HIDOE will also continue its use of existing federal funding sources such as Impact Aid and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) title programs to supplement CARES and ESF resources in achieving better internet infrastructure for our students.

Finally, personnel are utilizing the Electronic Comprehensive Student Support System (eCSSS) to document the delivery of vital services to our most vulnerable students. Programs, such as the Education for Homeless Children and Youth, School-Based Behavioral Health, and the English learner programs, provide a more efficient structure for coordinating meal pick-ups, facilitating mental health counseling and treatment, and ensuring the continuity of instruction for our English learners.

3. How many public schools are providing some kind of education? For schools that may not be able to provide distance learning, if any, how is HIDOE directing resources and guidance to those schools?

All 293 public schools are providing their students with educational activities, whether these activities are delivered electronically or via instructional packets. To support continued learning during the extended period of school closure, the HIDOE's Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design has created and launched two resources: An internal website for teachers, administrators, and staff and an external website for students, parents, and caregivers. The external website provides continuity of education resources with tips, best practices, and activities. Both websites are updated daily with adjustments based on feedback received from internal and external users.

4. What is your expectation for how often a student connects with an educator? Are there data systems where you are logging these interactions, and, if not, then what federal resources would be helpful to make sure students are connecting with educators? How are non-classroom teachers being used to promote learning?

The HIDOE is keenly aware of the diversity of our students and communities. Teachers consistently tailor their lessons and class assignments to the specific needs of their students. The unique character of each classroom is ably guided by teachers and the HIDOE confers wide deference to teachers with regards to implementing their lesson plans, which includes how often interactions occur and what methods teachers utilize to track any progress. The HIDOE does, however, maintain expectations of teachers to regularly engage with their students, which has varied from a few hours daily to longer periods fewer times a week. The goal is to ensure the maintenance of as comprehensive an approach to instruction for enrichment, remedial, or intervention activities.

The HIDOE does not currently have a centralized database where educators are logging their interactions with students; however, individual schools maintain this information on each student. The HIDOE continues to research various ways to centrally capture learning experiences of students in light of the strict privacy considerations that we must maintain pursuant to the Federal Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA). Additionally, the HIDOE hopes to utilize ESF funds and CARES Act flexibility to explore ways for educators to better connect with students, such as the previously mentioned investment in connectivity instruments and digital buses equipped with Wi-Fi, particularly for remote areas.

Non-classroom teachers continue to support classroom teachers with the development and delivery of their learning activities, while helping to connect with students to check on their educational needs and well-being. These individuals are an important component to the effective delivery of a comprehensive education in the era of distance learning and will become more essential to allow teachers to focus on the creation and implementation of their unique lesson plans.

5. How many public schools are going beyond enrichment to provide some kind of education? For schools that may not be able to provide distance learning, if any, how is HIDOE directing resources and guidance to those schools?

All 293 public school institutions are providing access to some form of educational enrichment. The provision of this enrichment through distance learning methods is a response to the unprecedented challenges posed on schools by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond enrichment activities, the HIDOE high schools are also providing instruction to enable students to earn the credits they need for graduation and successful transition to post-secondary education and careers. While most educators are providing educational activities for their students, students who need more intensive support are being provided with remedial or intervention activities. For the schools that face obstacles in fully implementing distance learning, the HIDOE has worked directly with principals to deliver the necessary resources. Complex Area Superintendents are in constant communication with these schools to receive updates on needs assessments, which is then communicated to the appropriate state office within the HIDOE. To date, all 293 public schools have successfully implemented some form of distance learning.

News of the anticipated establishment of COVID-19 as a seasonal illness akin to the flu has compelled the HIDOE to look at formulating a permanent distance learning platform that is integrated parallel to traditional in-class instruction. This will allow for the continuous and uninterrupted delivery of educational instruction for all students, including those with special needs and with limited access.

6. Are there any other school districts across the country that offer effective models and best practices?

School districts across the nation are currently experiencing similar challenges in dealing with school closures and issues related to the end of the school year. The HIDOE regularly engages with other states and educational organizations to discuss challenges and effective approaches to address these challenges.

All HIDOE staff and faculty are equipped with video conferencing capabilities through platforms such as Cisco's Webex to allow for virtual meetings, including check-ins between teachers and students.

Kansas has provided an effective model in providing stakeholders with clear guidance on implementing various frameworks for the continuity of learning as well as practical implementation guides. The HIDOE continues to review the Kansas framework in addition to other practices and will continue to be part of the network of best practice sharing, borrowing from others while contributing our best practices. As such, the HIDOE will soon be distributing guidance with input from complex areas and school leaders. However, some refining is still required of our frameworks and implementation plans for establishing effective permanent distance learning platforms across our tri-level structure – schools, complex areas, and state offices.

Additionally, Gilford, North Carolina has outfitted 75 school buses with wi-fi and strategically deploys the buses throughout their district to provide students with connectivity. The HIDOE is currently meeting with potential partners to engage in discussion for the establishment of similar measures in Hawaii. This will help to address one of the most significant challenges of providing students in remote areas with internet access.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that the HIDOE has been experimenting and exploring different models of distance learning and blended learning for our most rural and remote schools (Kau High and Pahala Elementary, Lanai High and Elementary, Hana High and Elementary) prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts have aided the expeditious implementation of distance learning to provide the continuity of learning during the abrupt closure of our school facilities. We look forward to building on this success as we progress to the full integration of distance learning into the HIDOE's comprehensive educational experience for all students.

7. What offices within HIDOE are developing and implementing COVID-19 related guidance? What can we do to support HIDOE and these offices moving forward?

- Office of the Superintendent/Office of the Deputy Superintendent
 - Monitoring, oversight, and guidance for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to HIDOE leaders
- Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design:
 - Guidance on Long Term School Closure (Continuity of learning and student supports, grading, dual credit, graduation and commencement ceremonies, robust online summer learning programs)
- Office of Student Support Services
 - Guidance on Long Term School Closure for Students with Special Needs
 - Guidance on partnership with Hawaii Keiki to provide telehealth services
 - Coordination with Hawaii Department of Health on COVID-19 issues to inform guidance
- Office of Talent Management:
 - Guidance on Telework
 - Guidance on Evaluations
 - Agreements with HGEA HSTA, UPW
- Office of Facilities and Operations:
 - Guidance on Grab & Go Meal Program
 - Guidance on Cleaning and Disinfecting Facilities
 - Providing guidance to bus companies on cleaning and disinfecting buses

The Honorable Senator Brian Schatz
The Honorable Mazie Hirono
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- Office of Information Technology Services:
 - Guidance for employees on HIDOE Technology
- Office of Fiscal Services
 - Planning and revisions to the HIDOE Operating and Capital Improvement Projects budgets
 - Guidance on Refunds (i.e., school breakfast/lunch, student activity fees, A+ program)
- Office of Strategy, Innovation and Performance:
 - Applying for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Funds (ESSERF)
 - Guidance on US Department of Education waivers for fiscal and programmatic requirements of ESSA
 - Providing internal and external communications

The HIDOE is currently planning to transition from the continuity of learning to a robust summer learning program and a new school year of 180 days of formalized instruction, whether this instruction is delivered in our classrooms or through distance learning. We will need to upgrade our infrastructure for the delivery of instruction and data collection, continue to train our staff in preparation for different modes of instruction, prepare our families and students for different modes of learning, and determine how to continue to deliver the educational services as well as meal and health services should we continue with distance learning. Clear guidance will be provided to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.

As HIDOE engages in these new endeavors, we will remain in regular contact with Hawaii's Congressional Delegation to share our progress and any obstacles we may confront. Mahalo for your continuous support of Hawaii's public schools and please reach out with any additional questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent

CMK:wk



**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

April 29, 2020

Ms. Cheri Nakamura
Hui for Excellence in Education
4348 Waialae Avenue, Suite 322
Honolulu, Hawaii 96816

Dear Ms. Nakamura:

Since Governor David Ige's initial emergency proclamation in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) has placed the health and safety needs of our students and staff as its highest priority. During the past five weeks since the Governor's "stay-at-home, work-at-home" mandate, Hawaii's economy and way of life has come to a sudden and catastrophic halt. This crisis continues to leave an indelible and devastating effect on members of our HIDOE 'ohana, most especially our haumāna.

Both the Hawaii State Board of Education (Board) and HIDOE have acted with haste to secure the health and safety of our HIDOE 'ohana while implementing a response to the abrupt loss of in-class instructional days and securing sources of food for our students. Our initial food distribution sites came online within a week of the first stay-at-home proclamation and we have since increased our meal distribution to 74 sites across the state. While coordinating this critical meal delivery endeavor, our leadership team was simultaneously conducting daily virtual meetings with staff at the state, complex area, and school levels to immediately develop a plan to ensure the continuity of learning in light of the unanticipated and immediate loss of classroom instruction. These daily meetings resulted in a multi-faceted approach that includes the distribution of educational materials, created and compiled by our outstanding teachers, both online and via instructional packets; resources for students, families, and staff available through our Continuity of Education website and individual school websites; and educational programming broadcasted on television.

As you may be aware, many of our families are juggling a multitude of challenges both at home and at work. Our goal in implementing the distribution of both food and educational materials for students was to provide both ease of access while limiting the exposure of students, families, and staff to COVID-19 infection through strict adherence to the guidelines issued by the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention. Every critical decision was centered around doing what was within our control to mitigate pressure on our HIDOE families for the duration of the pandemic.

As this crisis progresses and we react to rapidly changing conditions, shortcomings in our system are revealed. Instituting a more permanent platform to effectively execute distance learning throughout our public school system has become a clear necessity. The diversity of the communities and the student population we serve requires flexibility to adequately adapt to the unique needs of our schools. This allows us to hone in on our most vulnerable student populations who are in most need of support. Establishing an effective system that ensures equity of access and the continued academic progress of all students through distance learning without hindering any momentum towards achieving their educational goals is essential.

The HIDOE is currently working to obtain a comprehensive distance learning platform, which every school can implement in parallel with traditional in-class instruction. Leaders at the complex area level are working with principals to assess the capacity of their schools to institute distance learning by the start of the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. Plans to include variations of distance learning for summer school instruction are currently under development. We are also committed to providing credit recovery and credit attainment opportunities with continued attention to seniors who require extra support as they prepare to graduate and proceed with post-secondary educational and workforce opportunities.

Throughout this process, we have been in regular contact with our relevant stakeholders, including our students and their families, the members of Hawaii's congressional delegation, Governor Ige, members of the Hawaii State Legislature, the United States Department of Education, the Hawaii State Teachers Association, the Hawaii Government Employees Association, and other community and business organizations. This communication and collaboration have been critical in forging a path ahead during this unprecedented time. The dialogue we have engaged in with our partners has proven effective in assisting us with developing policy solutions and making budgetary decisions for the Board's consideration.

As Superintendent, I am exceedingly humbled and awestruck by the dedication, commitment, and innovation of our entire organization. While many similarly-situated organizations were struggling with the concept of teleworking, our capable and devoted staff and faculty were able to coordinate and execute alternate plans in the face of sudden challenges. This ingenuity and desire to connect with their respective communities is evident in the dedicated outreach which is uniquely individualized on school websites and based on the strong relationships that exist between the schools and their communities. Together with our tremendous aforementioned partners, we are successfully prioritizing and addressing the needs of our students during this extraordinarily difficult and chaotic time. The dedication of our frontline teachers who continue to innovate their content and methodology to reach all of their students and meet their educational and social emotional needs is nothing short of inspiring. Collectively, they are more than just educators; they are also mentors, counselors, and cheerleaders.

Ms. Cheri Nakamura
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I am pleased that you are in regular contact with members of the HDOE's staff as you seek answers to similar questions that every school district across the country struggles to address. Please keep the HDOE updated with any suggestions or constructive plans your organization may have to assist in addressing the unique challenges that our communities face today. Thank you for your continued interest in our public school system.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christina Kishimoto
Superintendent

CMK:wk

- c: The Honorable Catherine Payne, Chairperson, Board of Education
- Members of the Hawaii State Board of Education
- Members of the Hawaii Congressional Delegation