

United States Senate

May 13, 2020

Governor David Ige
State Capitol, Executive Chambers
Honolulu, HI 86813

Dear Governor Ige:

Thank you for your hard work and leadership during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. I am encouraged by the low number of new cases in Hawai‘i, and appreciate your collaboration in responding to the pandemic.

As you know, residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities are some of the most vulnerable to COVID-19, due to underlying health conditions and congregate living facilities. A recent analysis found that the virus has infected over 153,000 residents at over 7,700 facilities nationwide, and that one-third of all COVID-19 deaths in the United States are nursing home residents or workers.¹

To date, Hawai‘i has avoided any COVID-19 outbreaks at nursing homes and long-term care facilities, and I understand that health officials are coordinating with long-term care facilities to prepare for infections and prevent outbreaks. However, additional steps, including dramatically expanded testing, are necessary to continue to protect these vulnerable residents and the workers of these facilities.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has issued new recommendations to state and local governments and long-term care facilities to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.² These recommendations focus on infection control, supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 tests, symptom screening for all, use of PPE, and staffing and visit policies to avoid transmission. In addition, on May 11, the White House announced that it is recommending that all nursing home residents and staff be tested for COVID-19 within the next two weeks.³ Other states have also taken steps to protect these vulnerable residents and workers. For example, New York is instituting new requirements for twice-weekly testing of nursing home workers.⁴

Given the critical need to protect our most vulnerable residents, I request that you provide an update on the strategy and additional steps that Hawai‘i is taking to protect residents of long-term care facilities and prevent the spread of COVID-19. In particular, please provide an update on:

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/05/09/us/coronavirus-cases-nursing-homes-us.html>

² <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/4220-covid-19-long-term-care-facility-guidance.pdf>

³ <https://apnews.com/2d88bf63385b06eac57eaa0dc3315d16>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2020/05/10/us/ap-us-virus-outbreak-new-york.html>

- The status of inspections of nursing homes and other congregate living facilities, including to ensure compliance with infection control protocols;
- Training for workers and caretakers to prevent disease transmission;
- The availability of tests and PPE for nursing home residents and workers; and
- The status of testing within these facilities.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for all you are doing to keep the people of Hawai'i safe.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator