

United States Senate

December 1, 2020

Governor David Ige
State Capitol, Executive Chambers
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Governor Ige:

Contact tracing is an important component of a comprehensive strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As you know, I was frustrated with the Department of Health's (DOH's) initial reluctance to implement a robust contact tracing program, but I have been encouraged by the ramp-up of hiring and efforts to improve the efficiency of the program in recent months.

However, I am writing with concerns about the future of the contact tracing program. I understand that federal funding from the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), established by the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act*, has supported the increase in contact tracing staff. The CRF can only be used for costs incurred until December 30, 2020, and I am alarmed that there does not seem to be a plan yet for how to fully fund the contact tracing program after December 30. I urge you to maintain the expanded contact tracing program beyond the end of the year and to utilize all available resources to do so. Now is not the time to let our foot off the pedal—we must do all we can to keep the number of new cases low and protect the health of the residents of Hawai'i.

To better understand the status of the contact tracing program, I also request answers as soon as possible to the following questions:

1. Is DOH planning to maintain the current number of contact tracers beyond the end of the year? If not, why not?
2. I understand that DOH has adjusted its approach to contact tracing to maximize efficiency, including contact tracing by priority groups. What are the specifics of the priority groups, and how does this approach ensure effective tracing of community transmission?
3. Beyond the CRF, what funding sources has DOH used for the contact tracing program?
4. How has DOH utilized the \$50,283,598 provided by the *Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act* for contact tracing, testing, and other activities? What portion of these funds is still available, and will DOH use any remaining funds for contact tracing?
5. What additional funding sources are available to support the contact tracing program?

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your hard work during this extremely challenging time.

Sincerely,



BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator

cc: Dr. Libby Char, Interim Director, Department of Health