

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