



February 25, 2021

Aloha Mayor Victorino, Dr. Pang, Dr. Char and Lt. Governor Green,

HALE Hawai'i is a grassroots organization that has sprung up around concerns around COVID and protecting our island home. We have representatives in each county. We have researched safety measures, worked with the County Councils on resolutions, organized peaceful demonstrations, tried to urge breaking up large groups like the drum circles and written many letters—some from individuals and some on our letterhead. We are writing one letter to address all of you to ask for your help with the vaccine situation here on Maui. Maui is by far the most far behind in vaccinations, yet we are the most infected island, sometimes with more cases than O'ahu. We have the most tourists and part-time residents. We are the island that has suffered most dramatically since the "Safe Travels" Program.

**Mayor Victorino:**

Please advocate loudly for our island. We do not hear updates about vaccinations in your press conferences or in the Maui news sites. For example, the Maui News report on 2/23 reported that Maui Health has finished the 5,000 canceled appointments and that the VAMS site would reopen for new appointments, but says nothing about the 14,000 on the waitlist. What happened to those who were already on that lengthy waitlist? Just on 2/24 there was a Maui News article with hopeful information about the numbers that Maui Health has been doing and plans to be doing. Up until now, no one knew the actual numbers of vaccines being administered by Maui Health. Another area that we need better communication about is which pharmacies are being given the vaccine for administration and how we are to sign up for those when we are at the proper tier. We are hearing people posting about the Mauiola Pharmacy scheduled to get the vaccine. Another person said that she happened to be standing in line at the Makawao Pharmacy and was told that they had just 20 doses. We are hearing that Kaiser Clinics will get the vaccine, so when will that happen?

We have watched you refuse to accept help from a volunteer COVID Task Force recommended by the Maui County Council. We have heard that you refused help from Dr. Scott Miscovich with controlling our cases here. We have watched in horror while you ignored the tier system that you promised would keep us safe.

Instead of useful information, what we hear in your press conferences is scoldings, telling us that we are "acting like little children refusing to listen." The constituents that you are referring to are the elderly and sick residents who have been imprisoned in their homes, afraid to see our own grandchildren. We are the ones who were appalled at you not opting out of the "Safe Travels Program" and who have been following safety guidelines to the "t", both because we are good citizens and because we are very afraid of what this virus can do to us. Of course, we are anxious to be vaccinated! Please don't shame and scold us for our anxiety.



**Dr. Pang:**

What are the comprehensive plans to get our island vaccinated? What are the procedures in place to keep the vaccines from being taken by tourists or snowbirds, who don't live here but three months out of the year? How many vaccinations are being given on Maui, and to whom by category? We need to know about Maui Health's plans too, in one coordinated report. We are hearing from several sources that the Grand Wailea and the Andaz have been approved to offer the vaccine to their employees under tier 1b. Why would that decision be kept a secret? Older people are still waiting for their vaccine while younger people working in tourism are getting it. Since someone made this decision, why not own it and explain to residents what is being done. It is ironic because we have been told that tourism is safe and that they are not bringing in the virus, but when the priority for the vaccine is given to those working in tourism, the message is clear. We have also heard that people in construction and in real estate are getting priority under 1b. Elderly and sick people like me have lost so much by leadership putting tourism first, and now it seems like our vaccines will be delayed even further due to prioritizing the industry over more vulnerable residents.

**Dr. Char:**

Representative Tina Wildberger said in the 2/23 Townhall by Kelly King that you mentioned bringing in the National Guard to help with vaccine distribution here. This is just what we need! We are watching mass vaccinations going on in Honolulu and on the Big Island—that's what we need here! We really need intervention here on Maui. The vaccine rollout here is not working well. We're not sure who allocates the percentage of vaccine, but please check on the allocation for Maui again. The slide that you showed says that Maui's population is 127,000 and that's how the 11% was allocated. I believe that our population is higher. In addition, we have the highest percentage of tourists and snow birds, and they are aggressively grabbing the vaccine whenever possible. It would be really helpful if either a strict verification for full-time residency is required (cross-checking whether people do their taxes in Hawai'i) or we are allotted more vaccine to make up for the tourists and snowbirds.

**LG Green:**

I watched you on the 2/23 Maui Townhall meeting, and did not feel reassured that you truly are concerned about what is happening here. Like you said, we are "doing much of the work", so you realize that we are exposed because of our high rate of tourism. Our numbers have been higher than Honolulu's on more than one occasion (including 2/24). We are the most under-vaccinated site. Yet you discount Kauai's research showing how a large percentage of cases are brought in by travelers despite the pre-travel test, and you say that the National Guard won't be able to do much because there isn't enough vaccine for us. In addition, you stated several times that Maui is to get 10% of the vaccine allotment—which is even more of a cut.

We have been writing to so many people asking for help with our very slow vaccine situation here and will CC them. We hope that Congressman Kai Kahele can help in D.C. and that AARP can use their clout to urge leaders to get the vaccine out and to put the elderly and sick before the young and healthy. We



have been working with the media to get attention. We are desperate for help and will be so appreciative.

Equal is not the same as equitable. Currently the state is distributing vaccines based purely on the percentage of residents because they are attempting to treat all islands as equal. But Maui is not equal. The island of Maui currently has more than 4 times as many cases per population than the rest of the state. Maui also has many more visitors per capita--almost ten times as many. This means residents are having significantly more interaction with visitors. Maui only has one hospital to serve its residents. Maui also has a disproportionate number of snowbirds and second home owners (many of whom do not count in the population numbers but are eligible for vaccination).

In order to be equitable these factors need to be considered when deciding how to distribute vaccines. A more equitable system of distribution would be based on the need. It is clear Maui is currently in dire need. Please take this into consideration when deciding how to allocate vaccine fairly.

Sincerely, HALE Hawai'i Maui County Steering Committee

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