



Alewa Heights  
Kalihi  
Kalihi Valley  
Moanalua Gardens  
Moanalua Valley  
Kapalama  
Red Hill  
Halawa Heights  
Aiea

# community bulletin

Volume 39, No. 1  
Spring 2022



## Aloha, Friends and Neighbors

The COVID-19 pandemic, now approaching two full years, continues to affect our island community. It has altered our daily lives, our workplaces, and even our economy. What is perhaps most concerning is the uncertainty of the virus as it morphs into new, fast-spreading threats and casts doubt on when we might fully return to our way of life.

While we deal with the pandemic, we must also fulfill our responsibilities as legislators and this year's session promises to be an important one.

### Committee Roles

I will continue to serve as chair of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and vice chair of the Senate Committee on Education. The former oversees the University of Hawaii system and the latter the public schools and various educational programs.

The Higher Education and Ways and Means committees held a joint informational briefing in January on the University of Hawaii at Manoa's athletics program, which has been experiencing turmoil and prolonged financial shortfalls. More information is contained in Hot Seat on page 3.

Education Committee members visited a number of Department of Education facilities, including the offices of Curriculum and Instructional Design, Student Support Services, and Fiscal Services. These firsthand tours give us the chance to see operations that support classroom learning.

### COVID-19 Committee

The Senate Special Committee on COVID-19, on which I serve, met during the interim on potential next steps in addressing the pandemic. With the Omicron variant spreading on the heels of its Delta cousin, we are concerned about the impact on our hospitals and healthcare system. If 50 percent of state-licensed intensive care beds become filled, we may convene and hold a public hearing to identify means of supporting the healthcare system and to discuss new restrictions, travel and quarantine requirements, and other public health policies.

### Procurement Committee

The Senate Special Committee on State of Hawaii Procurement, chaired by Senator Sharon Moriwaki, met several times after the Legislature adjourned to examine the state's procurement process, which is used by public agencies to purchase everything from pens and paper to massive construction projects.

Along with members Donovan Dela Cruz, Michelle Kidani, and Kurt Fevella, we were briefed by multiple agencies on the merits and shortcomings of the procurement system. We identified key problem areas and made recommendations to correct them.

### Supplemental Budget

Governor Ige has submitted his supplemental budget request for the executive branch, covering items not included in the biennium budget we approved last year. We have already begun hearings on the specifics of his proposals and you will be hearing more about them as they move through the Legislature.

The budget reflects improvements in the economy, following 2021's cuts totaling more than \$1 billion, necessitated by the pandemic and decline in tourism and related industries. Tax revenue growth since this past July has jumped 27 percent and the Council on Revenues forecasts a solid recovery.

New items include \$61.8 million for Safe Travels, the National Guard, and other pandemic-related expenditures. The governor is requesting the appropria-



Senator Kim (center) heads into the 2022 legislative session with her staff (from left): Gregg Hirata, Lisa Vargas, Angelina Spence, and Nancy Bernal.

tion of \$30 million in state and federal contingency money for pandemic operations. He is proposing to deposit \$1 billion into the Emergency and Budget Reserve Fund.

Education would receive \$689 million, some to restore funding reductions, \$32.5 million for classroom teacher differentials, \$240 million for public school facilities, and money for teacher housing in West Oahu. The University of Hawaii would receive \$86.5 million for various investments and money to expand the School of Medicine's residency program on the Neighbor Islands.

With Medicaid now providing healthcare coverage to nearly one-third of the state's population, the administration is requesting both state and federal appropriations for these services.

In the public safety arena, the request would restore money for nearly 300 positions in the Department of Public Safety, including staff for expansions on Hawaii and Maui and the Women's Community Correctional Center. Another \$15 million is to take a step in relocating the Oahu Community Correctional Center.

### Red Hill Fuel Tanks

The fuel leaks from the U.S. Navy's Red Hill tank facility have occupied a considerable amount of my time in recent weeks. Details on my work and perspectives on this situation are provided in Hot Seat on page 3.

### Redistricting

Every 10 years, in conjunction with the U.S. Census, the state establishes a Reapportionment Commission to determine the boundaries of Senate, House, and Congressional districts to ensure equal representation. The commission has completed its work and changes are in store for voters as population shifts alter which neighborhoods are included in what districts. (Similar county commissions are following suit to determine their respective council districts.)

By law, the group announced its proposed legislative and congressional reapportionment plans by January 8 and will submit its final version with the Office of Elections by February 27, 2022.

What is particularly noteworthy to voters is that all Senate and House seats will be up for election or reelection in 2022.

If there are changes to the boundaries of Senate District 14, we will publish them in the summer edition of the Community Bulletin.

### Citizen Participation

The State Capitol will remain closed to the public be-

cause of the upsurge in the coronavirus, but it is our goal to open up once the numbers subside. Despite the Capitol being closed, there are still many ways to participate and I urge you to get involved in our democracy.

### Stay Healthy

With the pandemic still with us, it's more important than ever to get vaccinated, including getting your booster shot. Medical experts have confirmed the efficacy of the vaccines in preventing or lessening the effects of the coronavirus. Vaccines are readily available so please take advantage of every opportunity to get yours.

I welcome your ideas and input on matters before the Legislature and encourage you to contact my office and return the survey I have included.

In the meantime, I am grateful for your interest and support.

Aloha,

Donna Mercado Kim  
Senator, District 14

### Capitol to Remain Closed

The State Capitol will remain closed to the public for the foreseeable future.

Senate President Ronald Kouchi and House Speaker Scott Saiki made the announcement on January 5.

Kouchi said, "It was our intent to reopen the Capitol from January 3, 2022, but with Delta and Omicron variant positive COVID-19 cases in the several thousands, the Senate is in agreement with the House of Representatives that ... the Capitol should not be opened at the present time."

The Legislature convened on January 19 and is scheduled to adjourn on May 5. Senate and House floor sessions and hearings will be held remotely. This decision will be reviewed weekly to determine if the Capitol can safely open as the number of cases subsides.

Information on legislation, public hearings, the television schedule, and other matters is available at: [capitol.hawaii.gov](http://capitol.hawaii.gov). Anyone wishing to offer testimony or have questions answered may contact the Public Access Room: [lrb.hawaii.gov/par/](http://lrb.hawaii.gov/par/)



# community survey 2022

LEGISLATURE  
2022



## Community Survey

Senator Kim is seeking your input on legislation that may be considered during this session of the Legislature, as well as on other issues. The results will be published in the next edition of the Community Bulletin.

### UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII FOOTBALL

The University of Hawaii's athletic program has long been financially unstable, relying on donors and taxpayers to underwrite it. During the 2021 fiscal year, UH athletics had a net deficit of \$8.2 million. However, the football program had a surplus of \$3 million, which subsidized other sports that generate less revenue. The football team's head coach has been the state's highest-paid public employee, yet the last person to have produced much success was Coach June Jones during his 1999-2007 tenure. This year, many top athletes are transferring to other schools, many claiming abuse and mental health issues. The athletics program remains in the red year after year. What should the university do to rectify the situation?

Eliminate the football program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Downsize from Division I (which is the 124-team Football Bowl Subdivision) to a lower division?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Should unlimited taxpayer funds be allocated to the UH athletics program?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Should the state require UH sports be self-sustaining exclusively through revenues and private funding?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

### RED HILL FUEL TANKS

Leaks from the Navy's Red Hill fuel tanks have posed a long-term threat to the safety of our aquifers and water supply. The Navy insists that the tanks are vital to the military's mission in the Hawaiian Islands, but there has been no significant investment to ensure the safe operation of this facility. All of the safeguards the Navy has put in place have failed to prevent leaks such as those that occurred last May and November.

Along with the Red Hill fuel tanks, do you support the complete prohibition of all underground fuel tanks?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

### MINIMUM WAGE

The last time the minimum wage was raised was in 2015, when it was increased from \$7.25 to \$7.75 per hour. It then rose incrementally three more times every year until it reached the current \$10.10 an hour in 2018. While there have been proposals to increase the minimum wage since then, the measures have failed.

Would you support an increase in the minimum wage, and in what amount?

\_\_\_\_\_ \$12 an hour  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 an hour  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$18 an hour

Should the raise be incremental over a period of years or a one-time flat rate?

\_\_\_\_\_ Incremental  
\_\_\_\_\_ One-time flat rate  
\_\_\_\_\_ Suggested rate

### ALOHA STADIUM

The Aloha Stadium Authority announced plans to demolish the existing Aloha Stadium and construct a new Aloha Stadium Entertainment District. While the current stadium holds 50,000 spectators, the proposed stadium would hold 35,000 spectators. The new stadium would have improved facilities and be better suited to host a wider range of sports and events. The project would be a public-private partnership, but would cost an estimated \$350 million for taxpayers.

Do you support plans to demolish the Aloha Stadium and construct a new Aloha Stadium Entertainment District?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

### COLLEGE STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS

As of 2022, college student loan debt nationwide has reached an all-time high of \$1.73 trillion. The rising cost of college tuition has contributed to this crisis. Many worry this debt will prevent individuals from being successful and discourage them from pursuing higher education at all. One solution that has been offered is the federal government should forgive student loans.

Should taxpayers subsidize a student college loan forgiveness effort, regardless of institution and tuition costs? For instance, should a student who attended an Ivy League school be entitled to the same level of loan forgiveness as a student who attended a less-expensive

public university?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, there should be forgiveness regardless of cost

\_\_\_\_\_ No, the size and type of student loan should be factored into the forgiveness amount

If yes, should it be full or partial forgiveness?

\_\_\_\_\_ Full  
\_\_\_\_\_ Partial

If partial, what amount?

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Our nation continues to be engaged in a tug-of-war over climate change and what to do, if anything, about it.

Do you believe climate change exists?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If so, what measures should we in Hawaii take to mitigate the impact of climate change, such as rising sea levels and reducing our carbon footprint?

However, such measures would require public funding from taxpayers like you. Would you be willing to pay more in taxes for these investments?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

*Mahalo for taking the time to respond.*

Please send your completed survey to:

Donna Mercado Kim  
Senator, 14th District  
Hawaii State Capitol  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

OPTIONAL:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_



You can also respond online via  
<https://forms.gle/LLzjsB4SuShga96a6>  
or by using this QR code





# Senator Kim on the **hotseat**



*In this edition, Senator Kim responds to concerns about the Navy's Red Hill fuel tanks and the University of Hawaii at Manoa's athletics program*

**I'm concerned about how the Red Hill fuel tank problem is being handled. Our aquifers are among our most precious and valuable resources, and the tanks are located only a hundred feet above that water. What's being done to protect the aquifers and prevent future fuel spills?**

I share your concern about this fragile situation. The aquifer affected by the spill is a primary drinking source for Oahu, with more than 400,000 residents and visitors from Halawa to Hawaii Kai receiving water from this aquifer.

Since the first fuel leak at the facility in 2014, I have been critical of the Navy's management of the tanks. The Navy had assured us they had installed safeguards to warn of any leaks and protect the aquifer, but I was doubtful. When leaks were reported in May and November of last year, my reservations were only reaffirmed.

On January 6 of this year, my legislative colleagues and I toured the Red Hill facility to see its condition firsthand. I saw conditions that confirm it is a disaster waiting to happen. Although the Navy assured us the tanks were safe, the only way to prevent future spills is to completely decommission these facilities.

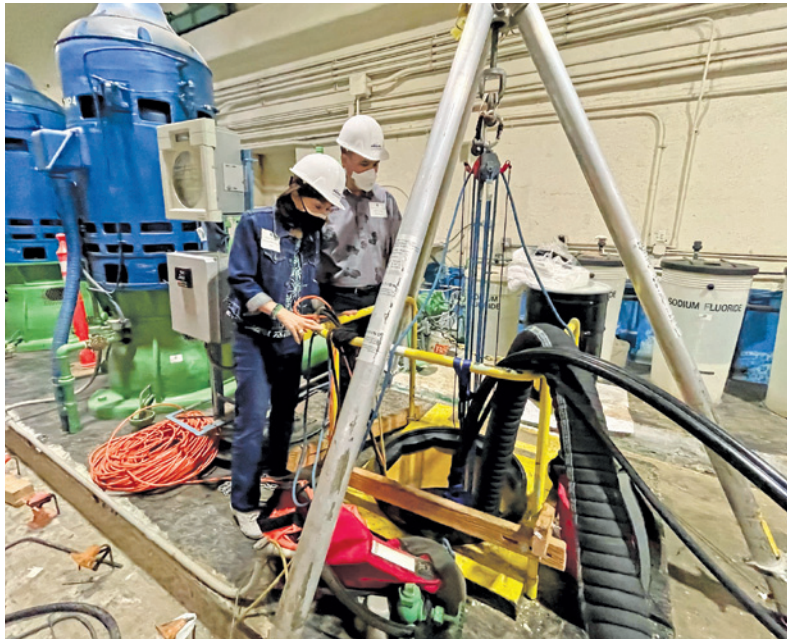
Lawmakers have proposed plans for the defueling and possible decommissioning of the Red Hill facility. Additionally, Par Hawaii has stated the company can accommodate one-third of the fuel stored at Red Hill as an interim measure.

After initially resisting, the Navy has finally agreed to comply with the Department of Health's emergency order to drain the tanks. They have yet to announce the long-term plans for the facility, and continue to maintain the tanks are critical to national security.

The safety and well-being of the public should always be paramount. I will work closely with our Congressional delegation to hold public agencies accountable and find a solution that protects our natural resources without compromising the capabilities of our armed forces.

The Senate is also discussing a measure, Senate Bill 2172, that would prohibit the usage and construction of underground fuel tanks half a mile away from an aquifer.

**As a University of Hawaii alum and diehard Rainbow Warrior fan, I was disturbed to hear about the problems being experienced by the football program, departures of several key players, and complaints about head coach Todd Graham. Why did you and other legislators feel it necessary to insert yourselves into the sports program instead of letting the administrators do their jobs?**



Senator Kim and Representative Aaron Johanson toured the Red Hill tank facility in early January. Here they peer down one of the 18 tanks in use by the military.

The Legislature has the authority over the University of Hawaii's budget. As chair of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, it is my responsibility to oversee the entire UH system and budget. So, briefings on student housing, the Cancer Center, medical school, procurement discrepancies, the Wonder Blunder fiasco, and other topics have been held, in keeping with this oversight duty.

I have to admit, though, that I have not held a briefing specifically on the football program because student-athletes and parents with such troubling claims had not sought me out. My hope, and expectation, was that the UH administration and/or regents, in keeping with their oversight responsibilities, would address such issues. The recent transfer of 19 players should have sparked their concern, and complaints that went unaddressed by the athletic director should have been looked into by the regents.

Thus, I was asked to jointly hold this public informational briefing with the Ways and Means chair, after it became apparent to us that the university was not effectively addressing these issues. The students and parents were willing to go public, which is uncommon, so that their concerns would be taken seriously and addressed.

The aggrieved players and parents we heard from in person and in writing had a reoccurring claim that the mistreatment by the head coach created an environment that was so unhealthy

it caused mental health issues and for some to leave a sport they loved. Rather than summarize their testimonies, I invite you to view the proceedings on YouTube, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zM0xh5ifNE4>

Not surprisingly, the UH officials—among them President David Lassner, Athletics Director David Matlin, and now former Head Coach Todd Graham—all denied the allegations. The president was more concerned that we “cherry-picked” the testifiers, instead of being willing to look into these allegations and address them if they proved to be true.

I can only wonder: If the subject of this briefing had been sexual harassment or of racial discrimination by a state agency executive, would the accusers and whistleblowers be considered “cherry-picked” to testify? I think not.

It was my hope that the UH administration and Board of Regents would have shown a greater sense of urgency in this matter. I was criticized for my involvement and told by some to “stay in my lane.” The fact is as chair of Higher Education, UH and its budget are within my purview. I always prefer to let UH handle these issues, but when they do not and citizens seek us out to do something, the only option we have is to hold a briefing and shed light on the problems in order to get the UH to act. Sadly, the chair of the regents only agreed to take action after being prompted by we senators in a public forum.

This most recent incident follows a pattern of lax oversight at the UH, at the expense of taxpayers. In recent legislative sessions, we have heard from UH faculty and staff members describing numerous problems within the university that remain unresolved.

In the time since our informational briefing, Coach Graham has resigned as head football coach, but the Board of Regents should still investigate the matters raised in this briefing, as well as other hiring practices, to ensure that these incidents don't escalate.



Senator Kim questions UH President Lassner during the informational briefing on the Rainbow Warrior football program.



# STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Quarantine is for people who have been within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period **regardless** of mask use.

## QUARANTINE GUIDANCE

- Stay home (quarantine) for 5 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
  - If you were fully vaccinated\* OR boosted you can skip quarantine as long as you DO NOT have any symptoms.
- Wear a mask around others for 10 days.
- Get tested on day 5.
- Maintain distance from others in your home and wear a mask when you cannot.
- Watch for symptoms for 14 days after your last contact with the person with COVID-19.
- If you develop symptoms or test positive, **immediately** self-isolate and get tested.

\*For fully vaccinated and booster requirements visit [tinyurl.com/hlsoq](https://tinyurl.com/hlsoq)



Isolation is for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 or who have COVID-19 symptoms, **regardless** of their vaccination status.

## ISOLATION GUIDANCE

- Stay at home for 5 days (except to seek medical care)
  - Stay in a separate room.
  - Do NOT eat meals with other people.
  - Avoid physical contact with other people and pets.
  - Do NOT share unwashed personal items.
  - If you must be around others, wear a mask.
- Monitor your symptoms.
  - If you have trouble breathing, chest pain or other emergency symptoms call 911.
  - If you have no symptoms or you are feeling better after 5 days, you can leave your home as long as you are fever-free without the use of fever-reducing medication.
  - Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days.

donna mercado  
**kim**  
STATE SENATOR DISTRICT 14

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## UH Alum Joins Kim Staff

Newly minted University of Hawaii graduate Angelina Spence has joined Senator Kim's staff for the 2022 legislative session.

Angelina, from Mililani, majored in political science and women's studies, graduating after last year's spring semester. She also interned with the Senate Communications Office last session.

She said, "I'm very excited about this opportunity to work with Senator Kim, especially since her responsibilities cover my alma mater, the University of Hawaii. There's always work to do in this office, and I look forward to learning about the issues and concerns of her constituents, as well as the larger challenges affecting our entire state."

## Pandemic Relief Money Allocated

Governor David Ige has allocated all of the \$1.6 billion received by the state last May through the federal American Rescue Plan Act, approved for emergency responses to the pandemic. The allocations were a combination of legislative appropriations and gubernatorial directives.

Unemployment-related spending included:

- \$70 million: unemployment insurance call and adjudication center,
- \$800 million: unemployment insurance repayment, and
- proposed continued unemployment support into 2023.

Public health programs received these amounts:

- \$48 million: Hawaii Health Systems Corporation,
- \$84 million: emergency medical services and injury prevention,
- \$2.9 million: Wahiawa Hospital Services,
- \$11 million: Maui Health System subsidy,
- \$10 million: COVID-19 test kits,
- \$8 million: Department of Health, and
- \$50 million: Department of Public Safety pandemic response.

Tourism-related allocations were as follows:

- \$60 million: Hawaii Tourism Authority,
- \$11 million: Hawaii Convention Center, and
- \$41 million: Safe Travels Hawaii.

The University of Hawaii received \$28 million and its Hawaii Promise scholarship program received \$1.3 million. A sum of \$10.8 million went to services for the homeless, \$1.5 million to senior centers, and \$1.3 million for family health services.

The complete list of allocations is available at: [governor.hawaii.gov](https://governor.hawaii.gov), under "News."



## Legislators Celebrate Making Music

The Senate and House of Representatives celebrated "Make Music Hawaii Day 2021" with a certificate presentation to the organizers. The event is a musical platform of live events, programs, virtual events, and livestreams that promote and elevate Hawaii's music, hula, and unique cultural heritage while providing musicians an opportunity to share, connect, network, and create with artists statewide, nationally, and globally. Pictured are Alan Arato, Senator Kim, Nalani Jenkins, Representative John Mizuno, Kaiana Kiaha, and former Miss Universe Brook Lee.



## Schools Score in Supply Drive

Schools in the Department of Education's Aiea complex were the beneficiaries of school supplies and cash donations from community groups. Presenting a \$4,000 check to Aiea High School Principal David Tanuvasa (center) were, from left: Representative Sam Kong, Senator Kim, Nancy Hsu, Representative Wayne Suzuki, Senator Bennette Misalucha, and Representative Aaron Johanson.