

HFC Committee

From: Tamara A. Paltin
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 2:14 PM
To: HFC Committee
Subject: Fwd: Submitted Testimony re: Covid Task Force
Attachments: Council Letter 11.19.20.docx

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Completed

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: loribeth <lbhuck@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 1:50:01 PM
To: Tamara A. Paltin <Tamara.Paltin@mauicounty.us>
Subject: Submitted Testimony re: Covid Task Force

Aloha Tamara,

Thanks for asking for clarification. For my own clarification, I did reach out to all candidates during the election, I mentioned that I spoke to about half (approximately half is who responded).

Please see my attachment, thank you.

Aloha,
Lori Auldridge

November 19, 2020

Aloha Suzanne & Council,

After your response, I've given the suggested task force more thought. I feel like it's only fair to consider the opinion of another when asking someone to consider my opinion.

The Mayor's Opinion

The mayor's response was very telling—his flippant dismissal of a council suggested task force will motivate many of us to consider one due to his lack of respect for Maui residents & the council. It immediately raises the questions: What is he hiding? Why isn't he open to it? Does he see sending his phone lines to voicemail, not taking into account the struggles of Maui residents he was elected to represent, and declining to consider a unanimous vote from council as effective leadership? Many of us don't believe his strategies are working well or serving Maui residents. We do not feel heard.

Questions

There are some questions I want to ask each of you:

- How many families have you personally taken in since the lockdowns?
- How much of your savings have you drained trying to stay afloat?
- How many families are you buying groceries for each week?
- Have you had to wait on an unemployment check?
- Have you had a business go under?
- Have you suffered mentally or emotionally?
- Have you had close friends or family go bankrupt? Have to move? Had their businesses closed down?
- Do you have children who are suffering on all levels?
- Do you have elderly family or friends who are suffering and lonely in isolation?

This is the case for many Maui residents. This is a small island. There are so few degrees of separation—I'm sure that you know someone who is suffering or stressed or facing what feel like insurmountable challenges that go well beyond a covid diagnosis. The number of covid cases does not correlate with or justify the current mandates.

The Numbers

Something from Suzanne's email has stuck with me and I cannot shake it. She stated that "two weeks ago, we felt quite secure on Maui and this week, we have a reported seven new cases."

I ask that you take a moment and think about the actual number of cases you shared with me. 7 you said. Not deaths. Not hospitalizations. 7 cases. There are 7 people who live in my house at the moment. 7. The whole island is shut down because of 7 people—the same number that live in my house alone. Do you hear yourselves? 7. 7 people who have over a 99% chance of surviving their diagnosis. How is this meniscal number even taken seriously considering there are so many variables like faulty tests. Like sensationalism. Based on that number alone there is not the emergency you are presenting. People are committing suicide, losing their businesses and homes

(despite best efforts and proclamations...loans are being declined and rent is still do), draining their savings, taking on other families, moving off island, living with extreme anxiety that has been induced by government mandates and restrictions that are causing more suffering and harm than good. Seven. You cannot justify that. 7 is the fact. 7 is what is. At one point it was zero and that wasn't good enough then. You can't outrun this. Those 7 people matter. So do the over 100,000 other Maui residents.

Stop staring at the numbers and thinking that they are going to be your solution. The answer is not in the numbers.

If 7 people makes an emergency then please consider that there are more than 7 depressed kids at home right now, there are more than 7 kapuna who are isolated and lonely, there are more than 7 businesses that have gone under, there are more than 7 people hungry, there are more than 7 people with anxiety, there are more than 7 pregnant women who feel afraid to give birth on this island, there are more than 7 alcoholics who are suffering, there are more than 7 domestic abuse victims, , there are more than 7 people who are out of money this week, there are more than 7 people hiring bankruptcy lawyers, there are more than 7 people who lost their homes, there are more than 7 people who are suicidal at this very moment.

Since you are seriously considering a “task force” to show up and support the Maui community, here is what I (and many on Maui) hope the council will focus on with the proposed sub-committee:

- **Give it an appropriate name.** Call it a resource for the community if that is what you want it to be. “Task force” at this point makes many of us cringe. It’s aggressive. It brings no comfort. It adds to the sensationalism. The MPD undercover task force for mask enforcement has left a bitter taste in our mouths. It doesn’t feel good or authentic for people to be told there is a task force that is “protecting” them while that same task force is undercover and hiding from them. If this is to serve the community, then that’s what it must openly do.
- **Focus on listening.** How are you listening to residents? How do you hold yourselves accountable as representatives? You were elected to represent the people and yet Maui residents do not feel heard. Create measureable, transparent ways of proving that you are listening to and representing the requests and opinions of residents—ways you can show us you are listening and representing us.
- **Focus on mental health.** People are suffering. That is what is more concerning than covid numbers. An occasional mention of an available hotline for mental health issues isn’t enough. At some point the cause of the mental strain and stress has to be acknowledged and corrected.
- **Kapuna.** We’re lectured that we have to be compassionate about our elderly in the community because they are at risk. They are more than “at risk” covid, they are experiencing extreme loneliness and isolation due to the mandates and created fear. There is a disconnect—it is not okay to tell people they need to change their lives to save the

elderly while simultaneously making the lives of our elderly worse. Pay better attention and take more connection centered care of our beloved kapuna community members.

- **Acknowledge multiple opinions.** Anytime I or many of my friends have expressed an opinion that does not align with current government opinion to an elected official or government employee, we are immediately reminded that there are “people who feel opposite of us.” That is a given. It’s time to look beyond this superficial fact and time to move deeper into considering all opinions that are expressed. It’s dismissive and unhelpful to point out the obvious—of course there are multiple opinions and not everyone is going to agree on one solution. We simply ask that you give the same weight and consideration to all opinions and document how you are considering these opinions as well as what the opinions are.
- **Masks:** Masks are not a one size fits all solution. The “masks work” doctrine is unfalsifiable: if cases go down, it proves masks work. If cases go up, it proves we need to wear them even more. It’s illogical. The numbers go up and down and it’s all because of masks and not because of masks. There is literally no evidence against them being shared with the public—just the illogic—that should be an immediate red flag. When do the mask mandates end? I ask not because they are inconvenient, but because there are (again) opposing views. There are medical professionals speaking out against mask wearing. Why is it being mandated that we only listen to one side of the story?

We do not want more enforcement and threats, but common sense and proof. Acknowledge that the CDC is a corrupt organization with conflicts of interests and profits to protect. Acknowledge that Fauci is an academic doctor and not someone on the ground and front lines. Stop following the one size fits all suggestions from corrupt organizations and individuals and start paying attention to the unique needs of the people on this island. Look at and acknowledge the corrupt leadership—for example, the surgeon general telling us to wear masks and then receiving a citation for not wearing one here in the state of Hawaii. And Governor Newsome telling people not to meet for the holidays and then meeting people here on Maui. The “leaders” are hypocrites. Let them eat cake is an understatement. Please don’t be part of this corrupt, hypocritical leadership. Be the on the ground, front lines government that shifts this cycle of corruption.

- **Transparency.** Thank you for this suggestion. It’s easy to get on board with the council’s desire for more transparency about how the CARES Act funding was and is being used. Demand more communication with the mayor—for our sake. By all means, speak up and let the public know if/how/when you are being ignored, dismissed, or disrespected by the mayor or his office. We would welcome a diverse, thorough presentation of information, facts, opinions, and the requests of the people and not vague charts occasionally flashed to us on social media.
- **Protect medical freedoms.** Medical freedom is a basic human right. Any and all committee focusing on any medical issue should have medical freedom at the top of their list. Where there is risk there must be choice. No one should be asked to light themselves on fire to keep others warm. Part of your job as an elected official is to protect our most

basic rights. If we don't have medical freedom then we are not free. Speak against medical mandates. Offer information about vaccines, treatments, preventatives, etc.—but then leave people the freedom to decide what is best for them and their children. Protect our private conversations that happen one on one in our private doctor's office.

- **Protect those with medical exemptions.** Members of our community are being harassed, unfairly restricted, and bullied by businesses and people who are not respecting the legitimate exemptions that are in place. Please consider them and encourage more compassion for all. Again, this is yet another example of how the masks and mandates are creating more suffering and harm.
- **Keep the mayor in check.** He seems to have forgotten himself—talking in a condescending tone, calling his constituents “knuckleheads,” not managing his disrespectful staff, and not addressing the REAL issues that are afflicting Maui residents: which are hunger, depression, anxiety, bankruptcy, suicide, the economy tanking, inescapable daily suffering, isolation, and no sense of wellbeing and safety—with no end in sight. He has given us no hope.
- **Counteract the fear.** When communicating with the public, start talking about hope and moving forward. Start sharing information in a non-threatening way. Let go of the need &/or desire for power and control and bring us what we need and want—hope, a way forward, opportunities for us to move forward. People are being conditioned to fear their family, friends, and other people. It's too much. Dehumanization, isolation, depression, fear, anxiety—this is an unacceptable new normal. Raise the bar. Be that local level, grassroots movement toward hope, prosperity, real connection, community, and aloha.
- **Diversity.** When choosing public representatives for this subcommittee, who do you plan to choose to fill these positions? I humbly request that you bring in a variety of opinions and perspectives—don't simply create an echo chamber of people who agree with you. So far Maui officials' ideas about “the government and the public working together” has been “do as I say or be fined.” There needs to be a more accurate representation of Maui residents.
- **Public Outreach.** Make this a priority. Prove to us that you are here to serve us, listen to us, and represent us.
- **The End Game.** When does this end? This isn't a matter of people being impatient, it's a matter of actual wellbeing. We need to get beyond this, not stay in the muck. The suffering needs to end. Ultimately the goal of this special committee should be “no need for this committee.” Set that as the end goal and then make strides toward that—with accountability along the way. Be the example of accountability that you want in all levels of government.
- **Please, just bring some common sense and critical thinking to the table.**

Thank you for your time. I do believe that most members of our county council are genuinely interested in helping the people of Maui. Some things just aren't working. I see that, you see that, we all see that. There is an opportunity for change—to move forward. We need to seize that with connection, truth, transparency, listening, and the protection of rights and freedoms. It can be done. It has to be done.

I'm available by email: lbhuck@yahoo.com

With Aloha,

Lori Auldridge, M.A., M.F.A.