

HFC Committee

From: Yukilei Sugimura
Sent: Sunday, September 20, 2020 12:34 PM
To: HFC Committee
Cc: Lesley J. Milner
Subject: Katie Folio concern, Kula Playground, COVID-19 safety and health
Attachments: scan0189.pdf

Provide the attached for discussion in HFC committee is the chair so desires.

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Director of Council Services
Traci N. T. Fujita, Esq.

COUNTY COUNCIL
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September 20, 2020

To: Riki Hokama, Chair
Healthy Families and Communities Committee

Fr: Yuki Lei Sugimura, Vice Chair

Yuki Lei Sugimura

Re: Health and Safety from COVID-19, Rules and Enforcement
Impact on playground equipment and parks facilities

Attached is an email I received from Katie Folio on her families experience and concern of using the new Kula playground equipment and lack of facemask or abiding by the parks signage on COVID-19 rules. She says that although this was at the upcountry facility it maybe an issue at other county facilities.

Ms. Folio asks the county to consider options for more enforcement of mask mandates and/or CDC health requirements at our public parks and playgrounds so all can use these spaces safely.

cc: Karla Peters, Director, Parks Department
enclosure

Subject: Kula playground mask enforcement request

Date: Thursday, September 17, 2020 at 8:57:30 AM Hawaii-Aleutian Standard Time

From: Katie Folio

To: Yukilei Sugimura

Aloha and good morning, Councilmember Sugimura,

I'm writing as a resident of Kula and mother of two young girls, ages three and six, who are so appreciative of the new Kula Park playground. It's a wonderful addition to the park and to our community, and we are so grateful to have a fun outdoor space where the girls can have a great time while getting physical activity - especially during these covid times. Which brings me to why I am writing today.

I have visited the park with my girls three times since it opened, but we have only been able to play briefly once. This is because, while signage is clearly posted all over the playground that masks are required, very few people actually do. On our first visit on opening day, there were probably 30 or so people on the playground, but no one was wearing masks so I quickly made my girls pack up and leave. They were so disappointed, but I wasn't willing to risk our family's or our community's health.

Shortly after this, I received a call from a good friend who also lives in Kula. She had tried taking her two young girls and five month old son and had the same experience. She was very upset and wanted to know what she could do to get the mask mandate enforced. Her girls were also disappointed because, while they were willing to wear their masks, no one else was. They felt it was deeply unfair that they couldn't use the playground while all the families breaking the rules were able to.

The second time I took my keiki, the same thing happened, but it was even worse. I'd say 50 children and adults were at the playground that day and still not a single person was wearing a mask. The numerous children on the playground that day were having a wonderful time playing tag and running throughout the play structures, laughing and shouting, but not a one of them was wearing a mask, nor were any of the supervising adults. I could just visualize the aerosols being produced, so immediately turned my children away.

The next day we tried again, and surprisingly had some limited success. Finally, a majority of adults were wearing their masks when we arrived, and perhaps a bit more than half of the children wore them as well. The crowd was a bit smaller and everyone was a bit more spread out. This time I let the girls play for about a half hour, but unfortunately, as people left more arrived without masks. Soon the majority were not wearing masks so we had to leave yet again.

I am sure that if this is an issue for us at the Kula playground, this must be an issue across the county, and that we are not the only two families who are disappointed that we cannot safely use our county playgrounds.

Outdoor spaces and activities have been shown by science to be relatively safe, when it comes to covid transmission. The sun and breeze help kill and dissipate the virus, but mask wearing is so important to mitigate the spread in settings like playgrounds, where children are close together and exhaling heavily. I so want to get my kids outdoors again and to be able to utilize this park, which is conveniently located and accessible to us, but we need everyone to play by the rules to keep our community safe!

I spoke with MPD about my concerns and they were very understanding and said they do their best to swing by the parks on their rounds and help with education and enforcement, but unfortunately it hasn't been enough to change the community norms at the playground yet. More enforcement is needed to keep our kids and families safe and healthy, and able to use this amazing new addition to Kula, and the same goes for other playgrounds across the county.

I ask that the county please consider options for more enforcement of mask mandates at our public parks and playgrounds so that those of us, and our keiki, who are abiding by the law can safely use these spaces again. Mahalo nui loa for all that you do for our county and our community! And for the awesome new playground Upcountry that we look forward to being able to utilize soon!

Aloha,
Katie Folio
Kula, HI