



**HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM**  
**A S S O C I A T I O N**

February 2, 2022

The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Governor, State of Hawai'i  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Governor Ige,

Mahalo for providing Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association and Hawai'i Tourism, Business, & Community Coalition members with the opportunity to meet with key officials in your administration to express concerns regarding the possibility of a new booster requirement being added to the Safe Travels program. We were able to bring a diverse group of tourism industry stakeholders to the table to partake in discussions that were both informative and productive.

In the time since my letter to you dated Jan. 25, local COVID-19 metrics have continued to trend in the right direction. As I noted previously, we recorded our highest single-day case count of the pandemic on Jan. 18 when 6,252 new cases were identified. On Feb. 1, the State reported 1,068 new cases across the state—a significant decrease that was also reflected in the statewide hospitalization rate which has fallen from more than 400 to 321 over the same time period. These statistics seem to indicate that the worst of the Omicron surge is behind us, and we will continue to see new case counts decrease in the coming weeks.

Considering the above data and the positive discussions that we had with Lt. Gov. Green, General Hara, and DBEDT, I wanted to follow up with you and again request your consideration in moving forward with issuing guidance and encouraging travelers to keep up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination and boosters rather than enacting further mandates within Safe Travels that will ultimately have a negative effect on our economic recovery. I feel strongly that your goal of balancing public health and economic prosperity can be met, and the tourism industry is more than willing to do our part to make this possible.

After our meetings with your administration, HLTA issued a survey to our membership requesting data on how many employees are vaccinated and boosted, as well as any existing programs that provide incentives for associates to get vaccinated. The initial results were outstanding with the vast majority of businesses reporting high vaccination rates and growing booster rates. I have shared the initial data with General Hara and Lt. Gov. Green and will continue to provide updated information as more results come in. HLTA has been an outspoken

proponent of the COVID-19 vaccination from the onset of its availability, and we will continue to urge our workforce to get vaccinated and boosted.

Additionally, the Omicron surge has made it clear that we must continue to be vigilant in how we keep people safe within Hawai'i's tourism industry. As you may recall, HLTA was the first industry to have its health and safety standards vetted and approved by the Department of Health. These baseline protocols were key in re-opening the tourism industry prior to the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines and were highly effective in mitigating spread of the virus within the industry. We remain committed to implementing our standards and doing all that we can to keep our guests, staffs, and the greater community as safe as possible.

Mahalo again for allowing us a platform to discuss these issues at length. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or contact me at any time.

Sincerely,  
Mufi