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**Mayor Victorino issues statement on County Council's
Resolution to establish a rapid-response COVID-19 task force**

Mayor Michael Victorino released a statement today in response to the Maui County Council's recent resolution urging the mayor to establish a rapid-response COVID-19 task force.

Proposed by Councilmember Kelly King, the task force would advise the administration and the council by *"planning for and implementing mitigation strategies and emergency responses relating to COVID-19."*

"I certainly do appreciate the Councilmembers' suggestion and their intent," Mayor Victorino said. "But, with all due respect, we are now entering the tenth month of Maui County's emergency response to COVID-19.

"When news of a possible coronavirus infection in Hawai'i first came out in February, my administration contacted the state Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control to better understand the risks of a possible pandemic situation. Since then, we have worked closely with health and science experts, including Maui District Health Officer Dr. Lorrin Pang, Dr. Scott Miscovich, DOH epidemiologists and many others to mitigate the health impacts on Maui County. The County and State are managing this pandemic through a well-developed emergency structure known as the Incident Command System (ICS). This system is a standardized hierarchical structure that allows for a cooperative response by multiple agencies, both within and outside of government, to organize and coordinate response activities without compromising the decision-making authority of local command.

"From day one, my administration's top priority has been to protect the health and wellbeing of Maui County residents. We moved quickly to contain outbreaks, and Maui County's COVID infection rate has been comparatively low with a positivity rate of 0.6 percent today, according to the COVID-19 data dashboard posted by the State of Hawaii Emergency Management Agency. Statewide, the positivity rate is at 1.5 percent.

According to the CDC, Hawaii ranks lowest in the 50 states for cases in the last seven days with 5.6 per 100,000 population.”

“We have convened many meetings with professionals from the visitor’s industry, healthcare industry, medical experts, public safety officials, business leaders, nonprofit executives and other government partners. We’ve held daily meetings with department directors and deputies. My administration also has met regularly with the Maui Emergency Management Agency, Department of Health and Maui District Health Office. I have been in constant communication with the Office of the Governor and my fellow mayors. My administration also has consulted with and received recommendations from hoteliers, the Maui County Farm Bureau, Hawaii Farmers Union United, Maui County ranchers and Commercial Event Operators. We’ve also worked with the COVID Testing Committee, the Maui County Medical Society, Small Business Advisory Group, Nonprofit Advisory Group and Tourism Advisory Group, among others.

“We did this to gain their insight and knowledge to best position Maui County for success in our battle against COVID-19. We have regularly provided the County Council with updates through its various committees, received feedback from all members of the Council on our initiatives in COVID response and use of CARES Act funding.”

“My administration has always understood that our economy can’t function without healthy people, and people can’t be healthy without a functioning economy. For this reason, I convened the Mayor’s Economic Recovery Task Force, which was formed in late June and first met on July 8. We pulled together nearly 30 Maui Nui business leaders and community organizations to identify areas of greatest need and used their recommendations to prioritize CARES Act funding. I told the Task Force members their job would have three phases: (1) emergency response for survival; (2) strategic response to adapt to changing conditions; and (3) longer-term plans to stabilize our economy. We plan to reconvene our Economic Recovery Task force in December 2020 for phase two, if possible.

“It’s important for the County Council, and the people of Maui County, to understand the County is subject to state and federal jurisdictions over which we have no control. We can request, even demand, certain controls, such as a mandatory second test, but unless the state or federal officials agree, we don’t have many alternatives. For example, the closure of public schools is a state decision. However, I continue to fight for the health and safety of Maui County’s people because we’ve all seen that decisions can change.

“My administration has worked hard to maintain open communication with the Maui County Council and will continue to do so, but our COVID-19 response teams were established a long time ago. This was necessary for the protection of our community. Again, I thank Councilmembers for their concern and look forward to cooperating on measures that benefit the people of Maui County.”

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