

Aloha Everyone,

Thank you for waiting patiently for more specifics about receiving the vaccine when it is available to the different priority groups. We understand that there are many questions or concerns about the vaccine roll-out across the State, UH System, and JABSOM. UH has been working closely with the Department of Health (DOH) since October, and more concertedly since December, to ensure we are doing our part to follow the CDC and DOH sub-prioritization process for frontline essential workers. There is a continued imbalance between the number of vaccine doses received each week versus the huge demand. There remain many in the care home and foster home settings that have yet to receive their first dose. Numerous agencies have partnered across the state to set up vaccination options for those who cannot travel to a mass vaccination site and those vaccinations have started. Within our UH and JABSOM 'ohana, there remain unvaccinated [1A persons](#) (health care personnel as defined by CDC) who are also patiently waiting to receive their vaccine within a few weeks. All of the vaccines currently in Hawai'i are already allocated to those needing their second dose and to the many remaining in the 1A and highest priority 1B who need their first dose. Because Hawai'i enjoys such high life expectancy, we still have tens of thousands more 75+-year-olds to vaccinate.

The situation is definitely brighter than it was a few weeks ago. There have been numerous process changes at the Federal level, as well as the promise of additional vaccine doses by Pfizer, resulting in some optimism that the stream of vaccine into Hawai'i will incrementally increase over the next several weeks. On February 26, the [FDA Advisory Committee](#) will review the [Janssen/Johnson and Johnson](#) (JNJ) vaccine for Emergency Use Authorization and the [CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices](#) will also meet that week to review the data. It is important to note, however, that Janssen/JNJ will not have 100 million doses immediately available to ship to the U.S..

There are current mass vaccination sites across the State, as well as the vaccinations at the hospitals and by the mobile teams vaccinating the care home population. This gives the State capacity to deliver up to 80,000 shots per week -- but we are nowhere near receiving that amount of vaccine and do not anticipate reliably receiving half of that for at least another month. Frontline essential workers, defined as those who do in-person work with exposure to bodily fluids and/or potentially infected persons and spaces or those who work or learn in close proximity (less than 6 feet) to many throughout the day (i.e., labs, shop, studio, kitchens, ships) are starting to be vaccinated. It will take time because there are over 129,000 in this group, but we are all hopeful that there will be significantly more vaccine made available to the State within the next month.

Again, we thank you for your patience and understanding. The State's allocation and implementation strategies include plans (already in motion) to offer the vaccine to those less privileged than us, where SARS-CoV-2 continues to circulate, in communities with limited capacity to safely quarantine or isolate, and among populations that have no choice to telework and who have difficulty meeting basic needs like housing, food, and access to the internet for communication and education. There is much to weigh and balance during this time due to the short supply of COVID-19 vaccines. By doing our part, we are helping to ensure a more equitable distribution of vaccine and balance the risk of death with the need to keep our critical infrastructure running.

On a sobering note, there are confirmed highly transmissible B.1.1.7 variants circulating on O`ahu with indications that these variants are not travel-related. We all will need to be consistent with our use of facial coverings, physical distancing, proper PPE at work and school, and avoiding large gatherings. Mahalo for your efforts to keep Hawaii safe by living with [ALOHA!](#) Have a Super Safe weekend (Sunday, in particular). [Don't let COVID-19 win the Super Bowl.](#)