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TO: Complex Area Superintendents
High School Principals

FROM: Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent

SUBJECT: **Social Gathering and Commencement Guidelines for School Year 2020-21**

Our state has worked diligently to contain the spread of COVID-19, and it is evident in Hawaii's low case count compared to the rest of the country. We must continue to do our part to mitigate the spread of the virus and keep our students and staff healthy and safe.

With this in mind, large in-person social gatherings are cancelled through June 1, 2021, including proms, banquets, May Day celebrations, and other school sanctioned social events with more than 20 attendees. Due to the financial commitment and significant planning required, this decision is being made now to avoid the hardships families and schools would incur in the event of last minute cancellations. Virtual options are highly encouraged.

This guidance does not include commencement and transition ceremonies. A decision regarding limited in-person ceremonies will be made by Friday, February 26. The factors being taken into consideration for this decision include case counts, positivity rate and guidance from county, state and national health officials.

As schools start preliminary discussions and planning for commencement celebrations, alternative formats are also an option to consider. In the event that limited in-person commencement ceremonies are approved, these celebrations can be combined with virtual celebrations. Formats to consider include:

- **Virtual:** A live stream of the ceremony on the school's website, social media or other acceptable platforms and formats. Schools are encouraged to be mindful of the cost to televise ceremonies this year in light of the current budget situation.

- **Videos:** Pre-record and make available a graduation ceremony, similar to a traditional graduation ceremony in terms of commencement speakers and acknowledgement of student awards.
- **Staggered drive-through:** Vehicles are limited to members of the same household, one person per seat with a seatbelt, and one vehicle per graduate. Invitations and scheduled times are highly encouraged to reduce the potential for in-person congregation and traffic.
- **Drive-in:** Vehicles are limited to members of the same household, one person per seat with a seatbelt, and one vehicle per graduate, and vehicles requiring a special license to operate (e.g. trailers, buses) are not permitted. Graduates may exit the vehicle to participate in the ceremony; however, the number of students outside should be limited so proper physical distancing can occur.

For all events, schools are responsible to ensure the following:

- Compliance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state Department of Health (DOH), and respective counties, including any new advisories in effect on the day of the event;
- No person-to-person contact during the celebration and individuals may not shake hands;
- High touch surfaces (e.g. podium, handrails, microphones) must be frequently cleaned and disinfected;
- The availability of hand sanitizers and masks; and
- Security measures are in place to control any improper behaviors during the event.

Schools should remind families and staff to do a wellness check prior to arriving. Individuals who are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms, or who have been directed to quarantine by the DOH, should not come.

Details about graduation formats will be collected from schools in early March. Instructions are forthcoming.

Should you have any questions, please contact Deputy Superintendent Phyllis Unebasami or Lindsay Chambers.

CMK:lc
c: Deputy Superintendent
Office of Strategy, Innovation and Performance