OHA Board approves $3 million in COVID-19 emergency relief funds

145 1

HONOLULU (May 8, 2020) – The OHA Board of Trustees today announced the approval of a $3-million emergency relief package to help individual beneficiaries as well as Native Hawaiian communities impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic crisis.

"The last three months have turned our people's lives upside down," said OHA Chair Colette Machado. "OHA is doing whatever we can to help our families and communities hurt by this crisis. I thank my fellow trustees and administration for contributing to OHA's

relief efforts."

Chair Machado continued: "To our beneficiaries, our hearts go out to all of you and please know that OHA remains committed to aiding our Lāhui. We are a resilient people who have persevered through tremendous adversity over the course of our history. We will make it through this by sticking together and eventually come out on the other side stronger than ever."

During the OHA Board's first virtual meeting during the COVID crisis, held yesterday, trustees unanimously approved funding for a series of programs. First, trustees authorized the release of an additional $2.17 million to OHA's existing Emergency Financial Assistance Program grant, which aims to help Native Hawaiians struggling economically. OHA originally awarded the $1.66-million grant to the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) in November.

Re-branded as the Kahiau Community Assistance Program under CNHA, the grant provides up to $1,500 in one-time emergency assistance to cover mortgage, rent, rent deposit or utility debts of Native Hawaiians facing financial hardship. Such hardship may include reduction in hours or loss of employment. Yesterday's board action brings OHA's total investment in the program to $3.83 million.

OHA Chief Executive Officer Sylvia Hussey said that recent data indicated that OHA should direct resources to address the growing economic challenges facing the Native Hawaiian community.

"Our research at the start of the pandemic anticipated that our community's longstanding financial difficulties would make them more vulnerable to an economic downturn resulting from COVID-19," said OHA CEO Hussey. "New economic data is beginning to illustrate the heavy financial toll this crisis is having on our ʻohana. This is why the Board took action yesterday to provide direct funding to our beneficiaries most in need; why we advocated for renter eviction protection; and why we are helping to cover the cost to feed our must vulnerable families through our Kaiāulu Meals program."

New data from the state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations indicates that Native Hawaiians are losing their jobs during the pandemic at disproportionate rates. While Native Hawaiians constitute only 19 percent of the total working-age population of Hawaiʻi (over 16 years of age), a quarter of all unemployment claimants in Hawaiʻi from the first quarter of the year identified as Native Hawaiian. Moreover, between late March and late April, CNHA's Kahiau program received a 125 percent increase in applications, demonstrating elevated levels of financial hardship within the Native Hawaiian community.

This data substantiated prior research that predicted that Native Hawaiians would be at greater risk of suffering financial challenges, including loss of employment and eviction, from the economic impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. Native Hawaiians have fewer

financial resources to weather financial emergencies due to their lower per capita income ($25,590) compared to the overall state population ($35,255); and their lower median household income ($75,708) compared to the overall state population ($80,212). Furthermore, 12.3 percent of all Native Hawaiians live in poverty, compared to 8.8 percent of the total state population. Finally, like other Hawai‘i residents, many Native Hawaiians rely on the service and tourism industries to financially support their families—23.6 percent of working Native Hawaiians are employed in service occupations, which have been among the most impacted by the spread of COVID-19 and related business closures.

Yesterday, trustees also approved $830,000 to programs located statewide that promote community-based food security for Native Hawaiian farmers, fishermen, ranchers, hunters and other individuals practicing subsistence living. The funds will be administered by the Hawai‘i Community Foundation

“We need to make sure that our ‘ohana can put food on the table during this pandemic,” said OHA CEO Hussey. “But for many of our communities, the crisis is making it hard to access food at affordable prices. So we are working with Hawai‘i Community Foundation to support locally sourced food from area farmers and producers, and to help individuals who rely on fishing and other subsistence practices to mālama their families. Our hope is to help re-enforce the resiliency and strength of our communities.”

For more information on the Kahiau Community Assistance Program, call CNHA at 808-784-4464 or visit https://www.hawaiiancouncil.org/kahiau.

Additional information on COVID-19 relief resources from the OHA and federal and local sources are available at oha.org/covid19.

Category: Uncategorized
Date: 8 May 2020

OTHER NEWS

More

OHA BOARD CHAIR STATEMENT ON STATE DESIGNATING JULY 31 “A SPECIAL DAY OF

OBSERVANCE" REMEMBERING LĀ HOʻIHOʻI EA

MORE

STATEMENT BY OHA BOARD CHAIR CARMEN "HULU" LINDSEY ON ACT 226 BEING SIGNED INTO LAW BY GOV. DAVID IGE

MORE

OHA AWARDS MORE THAN $600,000 IN GRANTS TO SUPPORT NATIVE HAWAIIAN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

MORE

OHA HOSTS POAKALANI HAWAIIAN QUILT EXHIBIT

MORE

Office of Hawaiian Affairs

560 N. Nimitz Hwy #200
Honolulu, HI 96817

SITE INFO

Employment Opportunities
Staff: Webmail
Public Notices
Media Kit
Terms of Use Policy
Privacy Policy

CONTACT US

Email Us
Office Locations
(808) 594-1835

© 2022 Office of Hawaiian Affairs