



Aloha:

As your new State Senator for Puna and East Ka`u, I want to thank you for your support. 2021 and the next several years will be financially difficult for everyone but especially for our neighbors and family members who were living paycheck-to-paycheck prior to the COVID19 pandemic and the non-profits who are their safety nets. At a time when the Food Basket, the homeless services of Hope Services/Neighborhood Places of Puna and Ka`u and other nonprofits are being used heavily, the grants they depend on will likely be cut as the state faces an unprecedented state budget shortfall of twice that in 2008. Unlike the federal government who can do deficit spending, the State's constitution prevents the Governor and the State legislature from passing a state budget with a deficit.

I am hopeful that because our community has been social distancing, mask-wearing and testing, we can continue to open up our economy and work towards diversification. We have opened our economy sooner and longer than most because we shut down earlier and took seriously the need for social distancing.

2021 will not only be financially difficult but also emotionally draining. Historically, domestic violence increases whenever there is an economic downturn. While practicing social distancing, please be mindful of our neighbors' stressors and continue to be emotionally close and supportive to our family and friends.

Please continue to practice Aloha and be extra patient as our community will be more stressed than ever before. In this holiday season, please find happiness in the little things because we are lucky to live in Hawai`i.

