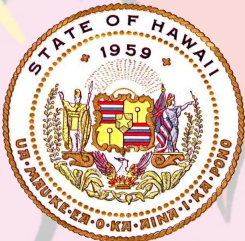


# Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs:

A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19



Hawai'i State Commission  
on the Status of Women  
Department of Human Services  
State of Hawai'i

# **Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs**

## **A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19**

Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women

April 14, 2020

By the Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women Executive Director Khara Jabola-Carolus in collaboration with members of the community. Special thanks to the Micronesian Women’s Taskforce, Hawai‘i Feminist COVID-19 Response Team, Katherine D. Chavez (Chair, Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women), Dr. Amanda Shaw, Dr. Kealoha Fox, Tanya Smith-Johnson, Deja Ostrowski, Jen Jenkins, Darlene Ewan, Kathleen Algire, Angelina Mercado, and Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies.

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	1
<b>Key Recommendations</b> .....	2
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>2. The State’s Current Economic Recovery Planning Processes</b> .....	6
<b>3. A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan</b> .....	7
<b>4. Recommended Principles &amp; Practices for a Gender- and Socially-Responsive Recovery</b> .....	15
<b>5. Conclusion</b> .....	17
<b>Annex A: Relevant Links and Articles</b> .....	18
<b>Annex B: Analysis of the UHERO Economic Recovery Plan</b> .....	18

## **Executive Summary**

The road to economic recovery should not be across women's backs.

COVID-19, and the measures being implemented to contain it, are deeply affecting our social and economic relationships here in Hawai'i and beyond. This new landscape is forcing us to reconsider many aspects of our lives and economy, including our economic future. The COVID-19 response and recovery plan sets the stage for a series of what could be some of the most important and transformative policy decisions that Hawai'i and the world have the opportunity to enact. This is our moment to build a system that is capable of delivering gender equality. It is time to center gender in the nation's rising racial and economic justice movements.

Current economic shocks and loss of employment from COVID-19 are being characterized as an economic "shutdown. While state officials recently raised concerns about "idle" government workers, including the 92.8 percent of secretaries and administrative assistants who are women (DBEDT, 2018), it is important to recognize that some aspects of our economies are actually in overdrive. If one recalls that the definition of the word "economy" comes from the Greek, meaning to "manage the household," this helps to bring into focus that women in our communities have never been busier taking care of loved ones, provisioning supplies, and finding ways to offset the enormous economic and social burdens of this time. These aspects of the economy usually go uncounted and hidden yet there would be no economy without these activities.

The cheap value of caregiving is not natural, but has political [origins](#). Caregiving, associated with and expected of women, is necessary for economic production to take place and yet it is split off from economic production, thereby structurally subordinating women in society. This is why even within their own racial, indigenous status, and economic groups, women are the most marginalized. Case in point: Native Hawaiian women are more economically vulnerable than Native Hawaiian men, earning 70 cents for every dollar a man makes, and 79 cents for every dollar a Native Hawaiian man makes. Women will never be able to equally participate in Hawai'i's economy without a social care infrastructure and if men are not supported and incentivized to share care activities.

Positively, we are witnessing the social re-valuing, in limited terms, of certain forms of work that have been structured and siloed into the most low-paid occupations such as caregiving, government administration, food and delivery services. Women dominate the service industries in Hawai'i especially social services, domestic services and healthcare because of systemic sexism.

Rather than rush to rebuild the status quo of inequality, we should encourage a deep structural transition to an economy that better values the work we know is essential to sustaining us. We should also address the crises in healthcare, social, ecological and economic policies laid bare by the epidemic. In order to do this well, we must integrate the knowledge developed by marginalized communities that will help us to prioritize greater social well-being as key to the economy. However, at this time, the voices of those most impacted by COVID-19, including

women, girls, femme-identified and nonbinary people, racialized women/women of color and Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and immigrant women in Hawai‘i, are largely missing from the discussions on COVID-19 recovery planning. Those experiencing the structural inequalities that lead to poor health, will feel the health, economic and social costs of COVID-19 the [hardest](#) and will have the least ability to “recover.”

Women’s health, livelihoods and bodily integrity are also particularly at risk during this time due to [reports](#) of increased domestic violence, sex trafficking including sexual harassment and coercion by landlords, interruptions to abortion access on the neighbor islands, women’s roles caring for the ill and other longstanding gender inequalities. Across the world, leaders are urging “governments to put women and girls at the centre of their efforts to recover from COVID-19.” That starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power, committed to advancing women’s wellbeing as a group.

The Governor recently inaugurated a [“Hawai‘i Economic and Community Recovery & Resiliency Plan”](#) led by Alan Oshima as [“Economic and Community Navigator.”](#) We eagerly await details of the processes being developed around the plan to ensure a “collaborative approach that brings together all stakeholders” and look forward to supporting these efforts by bringing together the voices of organizations working with women, girls and those who identify as women, femme and nonbinary.

We also seek to support the Senate Special Committee on COVID-19 and House Committee on COVID-19 Economic and Financial Preparedness and Recovery to craft plans that advance gender equality. In particular, we are concerned that the University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization’s recent economic [plan](#) for recovery, is missing consideration of issues specifically related to child and eldercare as well as the situation of women and girls. We recommend a number of Principles & Practices for a Gender and Socially-Responsive Recovery on page 15.

This document represents a living and evolving agenda for a feminist COVID-19 response and recovery and therefore is not exhaustive, definitive or exclusively representative but highlights key and emerging principles and recommendations:

## Key Recommendations

1. **Build a feminist COVID-19 response and recovery plan.** The COVID-19 response, recovery and stimulus actions must include input from the impacted, essential sectors that employ a majority of women and organizations that serve women, girls and people who identify as women, femme and nonbinary. This must include collection, analysis and publication of disaggregated data (gender, race/ethnicity, indigeneity, age, zip code, and social data) on COVID-19 cases and the economic impact of COVID-19.
2. **To contain costs or enhance revenue the state should:** Avoid austerity or fiscal consolidation measures at all cost since these will exacerbate the recession. Follow State Department of Human Services recommendations and ensure no cuts to social services,

including services for domestic violence and for maternal, sexual, reproductive and mental health and avoid government employee furloughs. Raise revenues by taking advantage of the Federal Reserve \$500 billion lending program to state and local governments which will help to stimulate the economy.

3. **To support, enhance and stimulate Hawai‘i’s economy the state should:** Shift from reliance on a precarious tourism industry which offers Hawai‘i residents especially women predominately low wage earning employment while the social and ecological costs of tourism go unaddressed. Support displaced workers via an adjustment fund for retraining and professional mobility, and support social entrepreneurship approaches. Enhance women’s access to capital outside low-wage sectors and the commercial sex industry, and in green-technologies and prevailing wage jobs, i.e., male industries, through specific gender and racial equity programs. Invest in subsistence living and the perpetuation of land- and sea-based practices traditional to Hawai‘i’s ecological and food system.
4. **Use federal stimulus funds to promote reform and programs in the following areas:**
  - *Economic Support*
  - *Special funds and infrastructure for high risk groups*
  - *Parents and Caregivers*
  - *Health and Healthcare Programs, Institutions Providers and Caregivers*
  - *Release Programs*
  - *Housing, Shelter and Public Services*
  - *Digital and ICT Access*
  - *Native Hawaiians* because the State of Hawai‘i is obligated to fulfill its share of the Public Land Trust Revenue, where twenty percent of Public Land Trust revenues are to be provided to Native Hawaiians. The State’s well-established commitment to the Native Hawaiian community should include a twenty percent pro rata share of the COVID-19-response funds in trust for their express recovery needs, which would help lift Native Hawaiian women.
5. **To diversify and reshape the economy we must:**
  - a) **Reorient our economies away from the military, tourism and luxury development.** Identify new opportunities for more sustainable economic livelihoods by identifying opportunities for Hawai‘i to support and benefit from sustainable PPE manufacturing, design or other opportunities and ensuring women have access to “green jobs” in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and environmental management and construction jobs (89.9% male workers) through stimulus programs that promote gender and racial equity.
  - b) **Build the state's social infrastructure (childcare, education and healthcare)** which has been shown is more effective in reducing public deficits and debt than austerity policies and boosts employment, earnings, economic growth and fosters gender equality.

- c) **Redress critical economic inequalities to promote women’s financial independence, which is a basic condition for recovery and liberation from gender-based violence.** Raise the minimum wage to a living wage (\$24.80/hour for single mothers), adopt universal basic income, universal single payer health care, paid sick days and paid family leave, restructure the regressive tax system through increased property taxes and corporate taxes once the recession ends, develop innovative programs to address houselessness, and center food system workers and farmworkers, not just larger-scale farmers, in agricultural and food self-sufficiency programs, widening access for low-income consumers.
- d) **Harness the role of midwifery to improve deficits in maternal and neonatal health care in Hawai‘i, especially in rural areas.** Prioritize maternal health services and health care for other marginalized groups through substantive consultation and cooperation not simply targeting those at risk.
- e) **Fully incorporate gender-based violence prevention in the immediate response and long-term recovery.**

Recovery stimulus funds are supposed to be neutral, but we know this is not possible in a gendered society without a thoughtful plan that ties in gender with race, indigeneity and class. The Commission is cognizant that a plan presented by a colonial power structure does not reflect the only or best route to a just recovery. We hope to make space for community ideas that speak not only about response and recovery, but also of repair and revival: repair of historic harms and intergenerational trauma playing out as male domination, gender-based violence, economic insecurity, poor health and mass incarceration. These are a serious threat to a sustainable, resilient society. It is clearer than ever that capitalism could not care for us during COVID-19. Now is the time to prioritize a revival of place-based practices and knowledge, and self-determination. Only in this way can we hope to redefine our connections, inseparably economic and social, with women, one another, and with the wider world of which we are a part. In our view, we are not seeking "to return to normal" but to build bridges to a feminist future for Hawai‘i.

## 1. Introduction

### *Unpacking the “economic shutdown”*

COVID-19, and the measures being implemented to contain it, are deeply affecting our social and economic relationships here in Hawai‘i and beyond. Hawai‘i currently leads the country in unemployment claims and the pandemic is forcing us to reconsider many aspects of our lives, including our economic future. While many have characterized the current economic shocks and loss of employment as an economic “shutdown”, it is important to recognize that in some ways, some aspects of our economies are actually in overdrive. If one recalls that the definition of the word “economy” comes from the Greek, meaning to “manage the household”, this helps to bring into focus that many in our communities have never been busier managing their households. Taking care of loved ones, provisioning supplies, and finding ways to offset the enormous

economic and social burdens of this time -- these are aspects of the economy that usually go uncounted and hidden.

Alongside this increase in activities of “social reproduction” -- what is needed to reproduce ourselves as a species -- we are also witnessing the social re-valuing, in limited terms, of certain forms of work that have been structured and siloed into the most precarious, low-paid occupations such as caregiving, food and delivery services. Some of the least valued and lowest paid workers are now being called “essential” even as little has yet been done to improve the material conditions of their work that would reflect this value.

### ***Center marginalized people and communities to build back better***

Rather than rush to rebuild the status quo, we should seize this opportunity to transition to an economy that better values the work we know is essential to sustaining us and address the harms and gaps in healthcare, ecological social and economic policies laid bare by the epidemic. In order to do this, we must integrate the knowledge developed by marginalized people and communities that will help us to prioritize greater social well-being as key to the economy. However, at this time, the voices of those most impacted by COVID-19, including women, girls, femme-identified and nonbinary people, racialized women/women of color and Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and immigrant women in Hawai‘i, are largely missing from the discussions on the economic impact of COVID-19 and recovery planning. These groups will feel the health, economic and social costs of COVID-19 the [hardest](#) because of the combined effect of sexism, racism and classism as well as other systems of oppression.

### ***COVID-19 will impact Native Hawaiian, COFA and immigrant women hardest***

With regard to health, “environmental racism” and the social determinants of health mean that low-income, rural communities and communities of Native Hawaiian ancestry and color are more likely to live and work in areas that have been targeted for toxic industries and lack access to healthcare, nutritious food and experience greater stress than those in more privileged communities. Health problems and [air pollution](#) are [contributing factors in Covid19 deaths](#) and these forms of structural racism have led to a vastly disproportionate death toll amongst Black communities in the U.S. In our communities, those experiencing the structural inequalities that lead to poor health, such as Native Hawaiians, COFA citizens and immigrants, are also more likely to be disproportionately burdened by COVID-19 disease.

### ***Feminist women’s leadership must be at the center of the COVID-19 response and recovery***

Women’s health, livelihoods and bodily integrity are also particularly at risk during this time due to [reports](#) of increased domestic violence, sex trafficking, sexual harassment and coercion by landlords,, interruptions to abortion access on the neighbor islands, women’s roles caring for the ill and other longstanding gender inequalities. Lack of representation in leadership and decision-making processes means that Hawai‘i [ranks nationally at a C-](#) for the representation of women, who make up only approximately [one-third of](#) members of the legislature. Economically, recent [national statistics](#) show that women represent [60% of those laid off in the pandemic](#) as the majority of ‘high contact’ service workers in impacted industries. Although the state data does not disaggregate [unemployment claims](#) by race or gender, there is reason to believe that Hawai‘i women are also at the forefront of impacted industries locally, as [the service and tourism industry workforce also employs many women of color](#). Across the world, leaders are urging



“governments to put women and girls at the centre of their efforts to recover from COVID-19. That starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power” (António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, April 9, 2020).

### ***Building a feminist COVID-19 response and recovery***

For these reasons and many more, the COVID-19 response, recovery and stimulus actions must include input from the impacted, essential sectors and organizations which employ a majority of women, girls and people who identify as women, femme and nonbinary. The Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women has convened a group of such organizations and individuals in order to develop and share principles and practices for implementing a gender-responsive and feminist response to COVID-19 in the Hawai‘i context. At its most basic, a feminist response means a response informed by an awareness of systemic sexism and action to end it. In consultation with this group -- and drawing on an international body of [established and emerging writing](#) about the gender and socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, the response to it and recovery efforts -- this document outlines key principles and practices as well as concrete needs and policy options which will promote a holistic and diversified approach to our economic recovery. We outline our concerns about the current economic recovery planning process and offer recommendations that will enable a more equitable process.

In addition to our working group, we also coordinate with other groups focused on women, gender and sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), disability, Native Hawaiian rights, and immigration who are also currently developing their own responses to the interconnected COVID-19 crises. This document represents a living and evolving agenda for a feminist COVID-19 response and recovery and therefore is not exhaustive, definitive or exclusively representative but highlights key and emerging principles and recommendations.

## **2. The State’s Current Economic Recovery Planning Processes**

The Governor recently inaugurated a [“Hawai‘i Economic and Community Recovery & Resiliency Plan”](#) led by Alan Oshima as [“Economic and Community Navigator.”](#) We eagerly await details of the processes being developed around the plan to ensure a “collaborative approach that brings together all stakeholders” and look forward to supporting these efforts by bringing together the voices of many organizations working with women, girls and those who identify as women, femme and nonbinary.

The **Senate Special Committee on COVID-19** and **House Committee on COVID-19 Economic and Financial Preparedness and Recovery** mainly include representatives from the state and industry, with [a few nonprofits](#) working on Native Hawaiian rights and homelessness, but seemingly ignore gender and women’s rights, women’s organizations, immigrants’ rights groups and other sectors. The manner in which informational briefings have been conducted has left little room for public input or consulted those most marginalized in our communities.

In addition, we are committed to advocate for the broad inclusion of research and evidence to feed into the Economic and Community Recovery & Resiliency Plan. In this sense, while we very much appreciate the hard and speedy work of the **University of Hawai‘i Economic Research Organization**’s economic forecasting and recent economic plan for recovery, we have been able to identify several omissions and recommendations that could enrich and deepen thinking around the next steps needed for Hawai‘i to resume some now closed down areas of economic activity.

Principally, **the plan is missing consideration of issues specifically related to child and eldercare as well as the situation of women and girls.** This is perhaps in part because the plan relies heavily on the suggestions of an [American Enterprise Institute study](#) which similarly does not address the disaggregated impact of recovery plans and measures needed to reach women, girls, immigrant communities and houseless citizens. We have analyzed the UHERO plan closely (found in **Annex C**) and offer several suggestions for expanding analysis and action: 1) implement gender- and socially-responsive public health programming, including with relation to contact tracing; 2) center the most marginalized when developing criteria for relaxing stay-at-home Orders; 3) consider the impacts and consequences of asking those most at-risk to carry the burden of ongoing social distancing under relaxed orders; 4) ensure free and equal access to the equipment and testing needed to return to work; 5) defer to educational experts who can highlight the disability, gender and social impacts of proposed changes to education and 6); enable a broader discussion on the role of tourism in Hawai‘i’s economy and society, centering the adjustment needs of the tourism workforce and the rights of residents. As the UHERO report correctly notes, “it is critical for government to maintain the trust of citizens during a time when its decisions impose such substantial costs on people (page 3).” Ensuring greater transparency and public consultation with the economic recovery planning is critical toward this end.

The following section highlights our response to the key questions regarding the economic recovery that have been collated from consultations through our working group:

### **3. A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan**

In this section, we outline several recommendations based on questions submitted to the Hawai‘i State Commission on the Status of Women about the COVID-19 response and economic recovery:

1. How the state should deal budgetary changes including restrictions, programmatic changes, furloughs or other employment related efforts to contain costs or enhance revenue;
2. How the state should support, enhance and stimulate Hawai‘i’s economy, given the possibility that even after the stay-at-home orders have been lifted, the tourism industry may not return to normal levels for some time to come; and
3. How the state should spend federal COVID-response funds coming to the state.
4. How the state should reshape and diversify the economy, making Hawai‘i more resilient to future economic downturns.

1. **How will the state deal with budgetary changes including restrictions, programmatic changes, furloughs or other employment related efforts to contain costs or enhance revenue?**

It is unwise macroeconomic policy to cut government spending during a crisis such as COVID-19 as this would exacerbate the anticipated recession. The state should **avoid austerity or fiscal consolidation measures at all cost**, given that the International Monetary Fund IMF and others have concluded that austerity is ineffective in increasing growth and increases inequality, which in turn hurts the level and sustainability of any growth. Specifically, the state should:

- **Follow recommendations from the Hawai‘i State Department of Human Services to Senate COVID Committee.** This includes ensuring no cuts to social services, including services for domestic violence and for maternal, sexual, reproductive and mental health.
- **Avoid government employee furloughs** wherever possible, as the public sector disproportionately employs women and people of color. Considering creating opportunities to allow existing government workers to participate in new roles within the recovery effort, rather than furloughing employees, coupled with free, safe and accessible childcare as soon as possible.
- **Enhance state revenues by taking advantage of the Federal Reserve \$500 billion lending program to state and local governments.** The Commission is cognizant that property tax and corporate tax are not ideal macroeconomic policy options during a recession. However, the state can borrow money, which is possible because the state’s balanced budget language has an exception for when the Governor publicly declares that public health is threatened. Interest rates are currently very low, and the Federal Reserve has recently opened a significant new lending facility for states ([the Municipal Liquidity Facility](#)).

2. **How should the state support, enhance and stimulate Hawai‘i’s economy, given the possibility that even after the stay-at-home orders have been lifted, the tourism industry may not return to normal levels for some time to come?**

The recovery represents an opportunity to shift away from reliance on a precarious tourism industry which offers Hawai‘i residents predominately low wage earning employment while the social and ecological costs of tourism go unaddressed. The social costs of tourism include [gender inequalities](#) and [human rights abuses against women](#), gender identity and sexual minorities, and children which have been linked to these industries. Instead the state should fund specific programs that will:

- **Support**
  - **Displaced workers via an adjustment fund for retraining and professional mobility.** In addition to ensuring low-paid workers receive a living wage (as below), programs should be developed to support workers to enter higher paying professions and gain funding for small businesses.
  - **Social entrepreneurship approaches to new economic activities** by individuals, groups, start-up companies or entrepreneurs, who seek to develop, fund and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues. Social

entrepreneurship best practices should be applied to a wide range of organizations, which vary in size, aims, and beliefs. Social capital of interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, shared norms, shared values, trust, cooperation, and reciprocity must form the heart of our new economic system beyond capitalism.

- *Enhance*

- **Women, sexual and gender minorities' access to capital outside the commercial sex industry** through just, humane transition to support program. The commercial sex industry is linked to the tourism industry as non-resident buyers augment demand by an estimated 30 percent (HSCSW, 2018).
- **Women's access to jobs in male-dominated industries: green-technologies and trade jobs.** Men represent 78% of employees in the global renewable energy sector. A program specifically aimed at ensuring green jobs go to women is needed, including special programs for women who are in recovery from incarceration.

- *Stimulate*

- **New economic thinking by funding feasibility studies on economic alternatives** that enhance social wellbeing as an economic priority and center women-led, especially Native Hawaiian and immigrant women's experiences, ideas and organizations.
- **Sustainable economic futures by investing in subsistence living and the perpetuation of land- and sea-based practices traditional to Hawai'i's ecological and food system.** This should include well preserved agricultural and aquacultural methods, agroforestry and land restoration efforts and technologies which foster mauka-to-makai and ridge-to-reef balance. Further, this investment should be fair and equitable to the resilience of ahupua'a resources, strengthen local food production and develop markets in sustainable materials (e.g. construction materials). These programs should also ensure nutrition and access to local food for all and are not dependent on economic status.

### 3. How should federal COVID-response funds coming to the state are to be spent?

In our work we have identified several urgent and short term needs as well as medium term and long-term objections (on the latter, please see concluding section). In general, however, the State of Hawai'i is obligated to fulfill its share of the Public Land Trust Revenue, where twenty percent of Public Land Trust revenues are to be provided to Native Hawaiians. The Public Land Trust embodies the spiritual, emotional and physical connection of the Native Hawaiian people to the land and natural environment as a vital connection to their health, well-being, and overall quality of life. **The State's well-established commitment to the Native Hawaiian community should include a twenty percent pro rata share of the COVID-19-response funds in trust for their express recovery needs, which could also help give Native Hawaiian women a more even platform.** Native Hawaiian serving organizations and Native Hawaiian owned businesses should be identified, contacted and evaluated for the recovery need types required to ensure equity-based recovery efforts protect Native Hawaiians as the Indigenous people of Hawai'i.

## **Actions and funding urgent and short-term support:**

- ***Economic Support:***
  - Expand the DHS scheme for **wages for family/informal caregivers**, drawing on established good practice.
  - Provide assistance with unemployment assistance for those who are limited English language speakers.
  - Ban rent increases for the next six months, as New Zealand has done.
  - Implement a Universal Basic Income, such as that implemented by Stockton, California and the city of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada and other cities, municipalities and countries.
  
- ***Special funds and infrastructure for high risk groups including:***
  - Undocumented immigrant women because they are ineligible for the one-time federal cash payment
  - Sex trafficking survivors who have recently exited the commercial sex industry. Create sex trafficking coordinator for the State to address current crisis and anticipated sex trafficking increase after lockdown ends and during the recession.
  - Domestic workers: home care workers, nannies and house cleaners who are experiencing financial hardship, similar to that established nationally in the National Domestic Workers' Alliance Coronavirus Care Fund
  - Women with disabilities: safeguarding and promoting rights to health, safety, dignity, independence and education.
    - Resources in American sign language on State websites
  - Elderly women, because two out of three seniors living in poverty are women.
  - COFA immigrants: recognizing the diversity of languages and cultures and providing specific funding or centers for specific groups.
  
- ***Health and Healthcare Programs, Institutions Providers and Caregivers:***
  - Eliminate co-payments for COVID-19 tests and treatment including for incarcerated women.
  - Provide PPE for homebirth workers and home care providers; informal caregivers, such as family members to seniors and at-risk people. Provide free masks for the public similar to South Korea, especially incarcerated women.
  - Require all hospitals and COVID-19 test sites to provide interpreters.
  - Immediately expand Medicaid for COVID19 to COFA migrants;
  - Increased mental health services that reach women, LGBTQ people and other marginalized groups, included incarcerated women including:
    - Continued mental health or mentor support to incarcerated girls at HYCF during the pandemic.
    - Ensuring no interruptions to mental health services at WCCC.
  
- ***Parents and Caregivers:***
  - Provide free, publicly funded childcare for all essential workers. Utilizing the additional Child Care and Development Block grant money and available federal waivers to provide no-cost care for emergency and essential workers. Designate

childcare providers across the state, ensuring equal access for all families, and work directly with the providers. Families should have minimal barriers to receiving care. For some of our essential workers (grocery store, post office, government, etc.) the closure of schools means an additional out of pocket cost for childcare.

- ***Housing, Shelter and Public Services:***

- Hotel rooms for unsheltered women and victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse and sex trafficking, LGBTQ youth and others who are not able to access safe spaces and where shelters are full. Victim advocates to track and support women victims infected with COVID-19 who require hospitalization.
- Ensure public restrooms are open, regularly cleaned and fully stocked; consider additional public handwashing stations and hand sanitizer distribution.
- Make public transportation free to all in the short-term, and free and accessible to low-income individuals across the board. (e.g. public subsidies for Biki disproportionately do not benefit women caretakers of children who cannot use these forms of transportation with young children.)

- ***Digital and ICT Access:***

- Provide ICT technologies and data plans for poor families to be able to access educational and new economic opportunities, including online applications for public assistance.
- Provide smartphones and unlimited smartphone data and text/talk plans for domestic violence victims and sex trafficking survivors.

- ***Release Programs:***

- Release all pretrial women detainees in jails and WCCC, and couple with funding accessible support programs for re-entry, including support for trans people. Incarcerated women have higher rates of health conditions that could make them seriously ill from COVID-19. Further nearly 2/3 of women in jail because they are unable to afford bail are mothers of children under age 18.

#### 4. **How should the state reshape and diversify the economy, making Hawai‘i more resilient to future economic downturns?**

We envision an economy that is diversified not only to become more resilient to the periodic crises of capitalism but which is resilient in a deeper sense -- that actively redresses inequalities and promotes the values of social well-being. In order to do this, we must:

##### a) **Reorient the sectoral focus of our economies by:**

- **Reducing economic reliance on federal military programs**, shrinking the military’s social and ecological footprint in the islands, in order to move toward lower carbon-emitting industries and in order to address the social costs of military institutions locally and around the world. Repurpose military installations for higher and better public uses.
- **Rebalancing the role of tourism and its forms within Hawai‘i’s economy.** Overtourism has highlighted the high social and environmental costs of this

industry and going forward, the costs and benefits of tourism must be more thoroughly considered as they affect residents and the changing climate. Some communities have found ways to retain more direct benefits from more sustainable forms of tourism, often in ways that are led by indigenous people (good examples are the practices of the Kuna people of Panama, the Yolngu people of Australia and of Kangaroo Island as highlighted here and there are surely there are many examples here in our islands). Reorienting tourism toward equity and justice would mean that tourism could be defined as “the voluntary hosting of visitors in local communities for the benefit of locals (and second, tourists)”. Some possibilities for reorienting this shift include “domestic social tourism in rural communities” which focuses on activities such as “having urban school groups hosted in rural communities... for educational tours” and tourism cooperatives

- **Reorienting new construction toward actual real mixed use redevelopment and legitimate affordable housing**, rather than luxury property development. The promises of new development and government backed re-development have led to turning local community and business areas into new areas of hotel and tourism use outside of Waikiki and traditional visitor destination areas. All new construction and land-use planning should be for local use. New construction and redevelopment that converts from use by medical professionals, local small businesses and local residential into luxury hotel should be prohibited land use. For example, the proliferation of new towers of luxury hotel use along the Ala Moana rail corridor demonstrate that development structures prioritize outside investor profit. Even during the COVID-19 crisis, decision makers used the time to approve another luxury tower complex.

**b) Identify new opportunities for more sustainable economic livelihoods by:**

- Identifying opportunities for Hawai‘i to support and benefit from **sustainable PPE manufacturing, design or other opportunities** that can provide materials to support the Covid19 response and create jobs locally. Opportunities should be most available to displaced workers and other marginalized groups and should consider worker-owned cooperatives and other methods to share income generated more equitably.
- **Ensuring all green jobs stimulus programs also promote greater gender equality.** Any stimulus focused on “green jobs” (renewable energy, etc.) or rebuilding infrastructure by funding construction jobs must proactively plan for gender equality and include formal programming for women, with special emphasis on communities of color and Native Hawaiians. There is currently no pipeline or support structure for women to enter the unionized trades (construction, environmental remediation, etc.). The Commission on the Status of Women is currently working with LiUna Local 368 (laborers union) to create a program but needs assistance in the form of one FTE Program Specialist (see HB2200 supplemental budget request) to oversee the project, as well as other research and advocacy to address the recovery and women. Indeed, research from Canada has demonstrated that COVID-19 recovery funds can be best used to strengthen care, education, culture and repair/reuse industries, because these

industries release fewer green-house gases per job and thus can support a climate-aware recovery.

**c) Build the state's social infrastructure (childcare, education and healthcare).**

[Studies](#) have shown that investing public funds in childcare and elder care services is **more effective in reducing public deficits** and debt than austerity policies and boosts employment, earnings, economic growth and fosters gender equality. This can be done by:

- Childcare and eldercare: The state currently has an extreme childcare shortage, with only enough childcare seats to serve half of the state's children under age 6 who have two working parents. Hawai'i also has one of the fastest **growing** elderly population growth rates in the nation and has an eldercare deficit that is on the brink of crisis.
- Create universal, free childcare and longterm eldercare, with pay parity to educators and nurses, for job creation and women's equality.
- Ensure that cleaning staff are directly contracted (not subcontracted) by the state and receive a living wage.
- Reinstate Medicaid health coverage for COFA migrants and provide healthcare to undocumented immigrants.

**d) Harness the role of midwifery to improve deficits in maternal and neonatal health care in Hawai'i, especially in rural areas.**

Prioritize maternal health services for other marginalized groups through substantive consultation and cooperation not simply targeting those at risk. COVID-19 is not just a pandemic, but a maternal health catastrophe waiting to happen. We are seeing the gaps, flaws and limitations of a system that was not built to effectively serve mothers and babies during a pandemic. During a pandemic, out of hospital birth is essential to minimize transmission and spread to pregnant/birthing people and their babies. This pandemic is showing us how unprepared and ill-equipped our healthcare system is to address the needs of pregnant and birthing people and their babies, especially Black, Native and indigenous people. Black and Native women stand to bear the brunt of these failures. The pandemic is likely to exacerbate the birth disparities between Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Black women versus their white counterparts that existed before the pandemic. This will have long lasting implications. Ways in which Hawai'i can be proactive and improve, that other parts of the world have implemented:

- Follow the World Health Organizations recent guidelines for breastfeeding with COVID-19 to ensure that the mother-baby dyad stays together
- Upscale the workforce to make maternal child health a priority
- Ensure there is a centralized resource where pregnant people can find the resources they need that are no longer being provided by hospitals such as childbirth education, lactation help and services, doulas, community midwives
- Upscale the use of homebirth midwives and make them a part of the health care team and collaboration
- Match hospital-based midwives with community midwives to meet the increasing demand for out of hospital birth options



- Ensure that hospitals are allowing mothers to have support people with them during labor so they aren't laboring alone and without advocacy
- Ensure sure hospitals are not inducing woman too early and without proper pain management in an effort to avert COVID-19 infection and transmission
- Ensure that insurance companies and Medicaid will cover midwifery services fully.

e) **Redress critical economic inequalities by:**

- **Raising the minimum wage to what experts consider a living wage** in Hawai'i for single mothers: \$24.80/hour. This will work to reduce homelessness, dependency on men, and costs to the state/DHS in terms of benefits to assist women because they comprise the majority of the state's impoverished.
- **Adopting Paid Sick Days and Paid Family Leave** so workers are never again asked to choose between risking their health and the health of their community or putting food on their table.
- **Enact universal single payer healthcare.** According to the WHO, Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. This definition of UHC embodies three related objectives:
  - Equity in access to health services - everyone who needs services should get them, not only those who can pay for them;
  - The quality of health services should be good enough to improve the health of those receiving services; and
  - People should be protected against financial-risk, ensuring that the cost of using services does not put people at risk of financial harm.
  - **Health is a human right** and as the primary means of accessing and financing care in the US and Hawai'i, health coverage must be available to all persons residing in the country, *regardless of their race, ethnicity, immigration status, the language they speak, where they live, how they identify and how much money they make.* According to the Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum (APIAHF), health care must be high quality, meaning it is patient-centered, responsive to cultural and linguistic needs and allows patients to receive the right care, at the right time and in the setting best suited for their needs. Health care must be comprehensive and include the full range of health care services and treatments that adults and children require.
- **Expand state Medicaid to COFA migrants because universal means everyone, and restore federal funding for all means-tested benefits for COFA migrants**
- **Restructuring the tax system through increased property taxes and corporate taxes once the recession ends.**
- **Developing innovative programs to address houselessness,** including for those recently released. Fund Housing First and other programs that provide resources directly to individuals who are housing secure, rather than spending on policing,

justice resources, and temporary housing. These programs could build on examples such as [The Homecoming Project](#) which acts as a matchmaker between hosts and tenants, providing funding for the first 6 months of rent and offering support to both tenant and host. Perhaps the state could fund a nonprofit willing to work as case managers between prospective tenants and those with existing space, especially former Airbnb accommodations.

- **Centering food system workers and farmworkers, not just larger-scale farmers, in agricultural and food self-sufficiency programs, widening access for low-income consumers.** While residents have been reassured that food and basic good supply chains remain intact, so too are [existing social inequalities that make accessing healthy food and basic goods difficult](#) for low-income residents, many of whom are women. While the Governor has touted food self-sufficiency goals, this plan has not centered the people working in the low-paid and more precarious jobs in the food sector -- from grocery clerks to farmworkers -- now recognized as essential workers.

- f) **Address gender-based violence in the immediate response and long-term recovery.** Empirical data shows that domestic violence and sex trafficking spiked during the Great Recession of 2007. Across the globe and nation, domestic violence programs are seeing a surge in victimization and increased [reports](#) due to shelter-in-place orders. Sex trafficking personnel in our government and nongovernmental sectors are anticipating increased sex trafficking as a result of the pandemic and mass unemployment. There is an acute shortage in public interest lawyers, social workers and advocates, housing, and programming to assist victims. The Legislature should take immediate action to enact loan forgiveness for public interest lawyers, infuse funding into programs, and create a comprehensive campaign to address the violence.

Below we summarize our overarching recommendations and principles for Gender-and Socially-Responsive COVID-19 Response and Recovery.

## 4. Recommended Principles & Practices for a Gender- and Socially-Responsive Recovery

1. **Include Women+\* in All Levels of Consultation, Decision-Making and Communication Outreach.** Many of the gaps and issues we are observing and documenting have always existed. The pandemic is only exacerbating and highlighting the structural inequities and lack of access to resources faced by women, youth, Native Hawaiians, LGBT individuals and immigrants. Inclusion and representation and policy that centers these perspectives are critical now more than ever. In order to do so:

- Implement innovative practices for **public consultation** in light of social distancing measures, including by addressing digital exclusion which means that low-income residents may not have access to technologies (please see the recommendations from the report [“Eliminating the Digital Gender Gap among Low and Middle-Income Women and their Families in Hawai‘i”](#)). In

particular, ensure the representation of women+ and their organizations on the **governor's economic recovery task force**.

- **Conduct gender, social, cultural and environment project appraisals or impact assessments of all proposed recovery policies.** These could be rapid project appraisals but meaningful in line with established [good practices](#). Conduct accessibility studies to ensure services and benefits are accessible to women in poverty. Too often service design assumes resource capacity that is not typical for women, youth, LGBT and immigrants who are most in need of benefits. This group could support the commission by developing criteria and requisites at the state level.
- Ensure the representation of women, youth, LGBT persons and immigrants within all levels **decision-making** regarding COVID-19 response efforts, with a particular focus on centering the voices of Native Hawaiian women and women of color.
- Ensure **ESL speakers and immigrants** are reached through planned publicity campaigns about social distancing measures or similar.

**2. Collect, Analyze, and Publish disaggregated data** (gender, race/ethnicity, age, zip code, and social data) **on COVID-19 cases and the economic impact of COVID-19**, on par with the State of [Michigan](#), or [better](#). Evidence from previous outbreaks has shown that lack of data impedes decision making and recovery efforts. De-identified data is essential to protect the privacy of all cases, patients, and the providers. Minimum race/ethnicity categories should relate to the OMB-15 standards and include Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Filipinx, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Other Asian and Native Hawaiians (alone or in combination), Mixed, and Other. Cross tabulations should be used to examine relationships within data that may not be readily apparent. Socio-economic data on job loss by gender is an area for the State to understand fully, since women and people of color tend to be the first laid off in economic recessions due to several important labor/industry factors. Women and people of color are more likely to have jobs that can be categorized as part-time, hourly, seasonal, and/or temporary positions. Benefits accrued differ widely in these categorical positions, to include:

- Paid time off such as PTO, sick days, and vacation days
- Health insurance
- Life insurance
- Dental insurance
- Vision insurance
- Retirement benefits or matching fund accounts
- Healthcare spending or reimbursement accounts, such as HSAs, FSAs, and HRAs.

**3. Support women+'s economic independence, the redistribution of unpaid care work and the circular economy**, ensuring jobs programs for women+ and public provision of childcare and programs, such as paid family leave that support more equitable distribution of childcare and recognized, paid work. This includes job opportunities for women under expanded Department of Health monitoring program and contact tracing program, and other issues as outlined above. A circular economy lens can provide Hawai'i with forward-thinking opportunities to introduce new ethical norms in

business and fine-tune the balance between profit and social responsibility. Women leaders across Hawai‘i are already proving they are ready to achieve more sustainable business practices coupled with a positive social impact for all of Hawai‘i. According to the Ellen Macarthur Foundation, a circular economy aims to redefine growth, focusing on positive society-wide benefits. It entails gradually decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources, and designing waste out of the system. Underpinned by a transition to renewable energy sources, the circular model builds economic, natural, and social capital. It is based on three principles with great resonance to Hawai‘i’s own ancient traditions:

- Design out waste and pollution
- Keep products and materials in use
- Regenerate natural systems

4. [Eliminate the Digital Gender Gap among Low and Middle-Income Women and their Families in Hawai‘i.](#)

5. **Reform the immigration system** in order to guarantee immigrants’ rights and eventually reaffirm our support for freedom of movement.

## 5. Conclusion

The COVID-19 response and recovery plan sets the stage for a series of what could be some of the most important and transformative policy decisions that Hawai‘i and the world have the opportunity to enact in 2020 and many years in the future. Recovery stimulus funds are supposed to be neutral, but we know this is not possible in an unequal society without a thoughtful plan that ties in gender with race, indigeneity and class. Based on history, we know not everyone will receive aid according to their need if the response and recovery plan. With today’s global emergency, we have a duty to address the issue of exclusion head-on, and ensure all responses to COVID-19 are inclusive of the world’s most vulnerable people starting in our own community. These problems can be overcome, but we must first admit that they exist. When those providing aid are held to task by the community to address existing power relations, reaching everyone according to their need is perfectly possible. This is the outcome we are organizing toward.

A successful recovery plan will go beyond policy, and aim policy at deep cultural change. Reversing climate change, repairing historical violence and inequality within and between countries, addressing inequalities within households, eliminating gender-based and sexual violence, and ending mass incarceration will require us to recognize and value all members of our communities beyond their value to economic production in capitalism. This is essential to our survival.

In our view, we therefore need to be speaking not only about response and recovery, but also of repair and revival: repair of historic harms and intergenerational trauma, revival of place-based practices and knowledge and self-determination. Only in this way can we hope to renew our connections, inseparably economic and social, with women, with one another and with the wider

world of which we are a part. In our view, we are not seeking "to return to normal" but to build bridges to a feminist future for Hawai‘i.

\* References to women+ within this document refer to women, girls and people who identify as women, including trans\* women, and who identify as femme, nonbinary and/or genderfluid.

### **Annex A: Relevant Links and Articles**

Center for Equitable Growth

<http://www.wiserpolicy.org/>

WOMEN AS A FORCE FOR ACCELERATED AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC RECOVERY  
POST COVID-19 IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

[https://www2.unwomen.org/-](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/04/200409_covid%20action_v11.pdf?la=en&vs=710)

[/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/04/200409\\_covid%20action\\_v11.pdf?  
la=en&vs=710](https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/04/200409_covid%20action_v11.pdf?la=en&vs=710)

### **Annex B: Analysis of the UHERO Economic Recovery Plan**

Overall, we agree that there is also a strong *economic* case for caution in reopening, in addition to obvious health and social reasoning. At least one study has found, based on data from the 1918 flu, that “cities that intervened earlier and more aggressively [by implementing non-pharmaceutical health interventions] do not perform worse and, if anything, grow faster after the pandemic is over” (from the [paper by Sergio Correia, Stephan Luck, and Emil Verner](#)). While growth is not the only economic criteria that needs to be considered in the recovery process, we agree that our economies are more resilient when we place health and wellbeing at the center. We would also reiterate the need to defer to public health officials on the proper manner, timing and sequencing of lifting Covid19 mitigation measures.

Below are our suggestions for strengthening UHERO’s plan and the state’s response regarding the suggested criteria needed for resuming some economic activity.

1. **Implement gender- and socially-responsive public health programming, including with relation to contact tracing.** The expansion of the DOH contract tracing program should be open to applicants from a wide range of backgrounds, more broadly than police and educators as suggested by UHERO, who may hold the relevant skills such as recently unemployed groups, university graduate teaching assistants and others to be identified. The expansion should ensure the representation of Hawai‘i’s different communities and language speakers, and those working with or from houseless and other communities in order to ensure effective tracing. Additionally, while digital solutions will necessarily need to be part of the contract tracing programs, these programs should also ensure that persons without access to smartphones can be reached through non-smartphone mobile applications or otherwise.

2. **Center the most marginalized when developing criteria for relaxing stay-at-home Orders.** Drawing on the decisions and recommendations of public health experts, we understand and agree that restrictions should be lifted only with an effective monitoring system in place and with the effects of lifting closely monitored. We would also include that the criteria for lifting restrictions should center those most marginalized, including houseless people, disabled people, the elderly and others who are at increased risk in order to ensure that cases in their communities are eliminated and not simply left with ongoing illness when the majority of community spread is contained. **We therefore suggest the goal of full elimination -- zero COVID-19 cases -- in order that those already most marginalized have their rights and needs considered.** In order to properly implement such orders, a broader swath of evidence and community input must be considered in relation to the socio-economic equity impacts of COVID-19 (e.g. possible policy responses and studies from the Center for Equitable Growth and Women's Institute for Science, Equity and Race [WISER], amongst others) and provide compelling evidence for how the state will ensure no COVID-19 cases amongst harder to reach populations -- such as the houseless and others -- and a plan for outreach in those communities. This should also be front and center in planning over the longer term until a vaccine can be developed.
3. **Consider the impacts and consequences of asking those most at-risk to carry the burden of ongoing social distancing under relaxed orders.** A disability analysis should be conducted about the implications of “strongly recommending the more vulnerable (older individuals or those with pre-existing conditions that expose them to higher coronavirus risk) remain at home” (page 9), as this could lead to discrimination and penalize the elderly. Rather, there must also be significant emphasis on testing, monitoring and public education programs that target able-bodied and young people in teaching them to take proper precautions. More careful consideration of these issues are needed than outlined in the UHERO or AEI report especially as regards long-term-care facilities and nursing home as well as proposals asking more at-risk teaching staff to teach online (page 11).
4. **Ensure free and equal access to the equipment and testing needed to return to work.** For example, access to masks - cloth and later, when supplies are available for surgical grade ones - cannot be mediated only through the market as this will exacerbate existing inequalities. Similarly, there is a need to ensure free access to any tests required to return to work, including the “positive coronavirus antibody tests” that the UHERO reports recommends in order “to take jobs that require close contact with other workers or customers.” At face value, measures such as these will likely to disadvantage women who undertake the majority of caring-- and now teaching -- responsibilities for children at home, for elderly and those who are ill or recovering. Safeguarding and promoting women's employment can only go hand in hand with effective provision of public childcare for essential workers, as we outline below. As industries adapt to social distancing requirements, it will be important to track data on changes to the workforce and layoffs in order to understand how workers who are on part-time, more vulnerable and precarious contracts are being affected. Ensuring free and equal access to the

equipment and testing needed to return to work, school, volunteering, and community life must also provide much needed support to rural areas and Medically Underserved Areas.

5. **Defer to educational experts who can highlight the disability, gender and social impacts of proposed changes to education.** Much remains to be determined about how educational institutions can cope with and adapt to the consequences of COVID-19 and economic recovery discussions should defer to education, disability and childcare experts in proposing measures for economic reopening. The state should make transparent the kids who are served, including access to online remote learning, disaggregated by complex area, grade, disability status, race, free and reduced lunch, and language status. These measures must safeguard the rights of students with disabilities, ensure the accessibility of online education, for low-income families as well as families speaking languages other than English in the home, and address the gender disparities in terms of women's time spent on new home and online teaching methods. Proposals for changes to education, such as morning and afternoon sessions, must critically address the question of childcare -- a subject the UHERO report is completely silent on.
  
6. **Enable a broader discussion on the role of tourism in Hawai'i's economy and society, centering the adjustment needs of the tourism workforce and the rights of residents.** As the UHERO report highlights, it is important that the state not remove social distancing measures too soon (page 4). However, recent comments that Hawai'i could become the "premier destination for US travelers", if it "is perceived as a safe place" made by UHERO Executive Director Carl Bonham raise some concerns about the benchmarks in place for safety and whose safety will be adequately prioritized. Although the UHERO report highlights a 12-18 month delay to restarting the tourism industry, it proposes no substantive changes to tourism as usual nor considers that tourism and air travel may potentially be permanently altered by COVID-19. We need proactive and creative thinking on alternative forms of tourism that better prioritize local residents (as we outline below), on economic alternatives to tourism and on effective adjustment, retraining and small business opportunities for affected workers.