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For Immediate Release

March 27, 2020

HIDOE seeks approval to modify high school graduation requirements in light of COVID-19 impacts

The Hawaii State Department of Education is seeking approval from the Board of Education (BOE) to modify high school graduation and commencement requirements under [Board Policy 102-15](#) for the class of 2020. The memo submitted by the Department today seeks flexibility in awarding a diploma or certificate to graduating seniors, based on approval from individual school administrations. There are approximately 10,000 students who are eligible to earn diplomas this year.

School facilities have been closed to students since March 19, with traditional, in-school instruction temporarily discontinued until at least April 30. Approval of the proposed waiver will provide educator-driven solutions to address the loss of educational content as a direct result of the COVID-19 crisis. This action will allow class of 2020 graduates to proceed with post-secondary educational and workforce opportunities without unnecessary delays.

The Department also determined it will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and make a decision by April 15 regarding commencement ceremonies. School, complex area and state teams have started discussing alternative means of celebration in the event traditional ceremonies cannot be held.

“The decision around celebrating this milestone with our seniors is an emotional one as most students have looked forward to this occasion since they were in elementary school. However, the safety and health of our community is paramount and we are basing our decisions on guidance from health and state officials in the coming weeks,” Superintendent Dr. Christina Kishimoto said. “Our request to the Board for a one-time policy waiver is a critical step in our efforts to adjust the remainder of the school year for our public and charter schools. Once we receive approval from the Board, we can formally issue guidance for meeting graduation requirements that has been developed.”

Details about the April 2 BOE meeting as well as the memo will be posted on the Board's website [here](#).

In addition to graduation requirements, HIDOE's planning includes its request to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) to waive standardized testing and associated accountability and reporting requirements for the 2019-20 school year. This request was approved by the USDOE last week. The public can submit comments until April 10 regarding this waiver through an online survey [here](#). For more information as well as the anticipated impact, [click here](#).

All Hawaii DOE employees will continue to work remotely until at least April 30, with the exception of those who are considered essential and must perform their duties at a campus or office, which includes meal prep and distribution at grab-and-go sites.

Beginning this week, schools started to prepare distance learning opportunities and/or learning packets to be distributed via email, school websites and some in-person. Work packets will not be graded, but many teachers are identifying unique ways to provide feedback to students. The Department has also stood up a resource for parents available at bit.ly/HIDOEVirtualLearningParentResource.

HIDOE COVID-19 updates will continue to be posted on the Department's website at hawaiipublicschools.org.

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