

Transcript for Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero Special Address - August 27, 2021

Håfa Adai,

Over the last several hours, I once again reviewed the latest data concerning our COVID-19 cases and met with advisors. And I want to be clear and direct: our situation is serious.

Over the past several days, our island has witnessed a surge of positive COVID-19 cases. In the last five days alone, we have had consecutive days of triple-digit positive infection results.

Hospitalizations have increased 300% in the last two weeks. There are 35 COVID hospitalizations between GMH, GRMC, and Naval Hospital, 5 of which are in the ICU. Of these 35 admissions, at least 20 are not vaccinated.

The rising number of cases, the hospitalizations, and the growing pressure on our fragile healthcare system, among other factors, sends a clear signal that it is time to adjust our strategy.

Upon advice and consultation with my State Surgeon, Dr. Mike Cruz, the Public Health Medical Director, Dr. Felix Cabrera, public health leadership, my economic recovery advisors, and our community and business stakeholders, I am ordering the following:

A limit on social gatherings to no more than 10 vaccinated persons indoors and 25 vaccinated persons outdoors effective Monday, August 30, 2021, at 8 a.m. Restaurant dine-in and bars remain at 100% vaccinated occupancy. All other limitations continue.

Upon advice and consultation with the Guam Department of Education Superintendent, Jon Fernandez, and the leadership of the private and charter schools, I am temporarily suspending face-to-face learning for pre-kinder through 12th grade, effective Monday, August 30, 2021, at 8 a.m.

While data at this time does not indicate the existence of school clusters, I am being proactive about the eventuality of spread in our schools. I am receiving messages and calls concerning the fears and anxieties that our parents, teachers, and students are facing because of the increase in positive cases. I recognize that our children's education is critical. But my concern for their protection comes first.

During this suspension, I want to assure you that Superintendent Fernandez as well as the leadership of the private and charter schools are working to assess other modes of learning.

Despite our community's best efforts to get vaccinated, the delta variant has proven to be a new and different enemy-- it is not like the COVID of 2019 or 2020. It is far more contagious and more harmful. While the vaccine won't prevent you from getting or spreading the virus, it will help keep you OUT of the hospital.

If we do not intervene immediately, infections will continue to rise, hospitalizations will increase, illnesses will be severe, and we will see more COVID related deaths.

According to a study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people who are not vaccinated are 29 times more likely to be hospitalized from COVID-19 than those who are fully vaccinated. Here at home, individuals who are not vaccinated are 32 times more likely to be hospitalized than their vaccinated counterparts.

Should hospitalizations continue to rise—both COVID and non-COVID—hospital beds will run out, and our front liners will be forced to choose whose life to save. This is the reality across the globe, where even the best medical facilities are bursting at the seams. This is what we want to prevent.

Throughout the pandemic, our island community rallied in support of our front liners, and I ask that you continue to support them. The greatest gift you can give to our front liners is getting fully vaccinated.

To be clear:

Vaccines are free.

Vaccines are safe.

And vaccines are effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and even death.

While we have recently implemented policies requiring proof of at least one vaccination to enter establishments where mask-wearing is compromised, we must also reinstate an additional measure to protect our vulnerable healthcare system.

These decisions are never easy, but they are necessary.

I have listened to leadership from both hospitals who have attested to the dire situation.

I have listened to Public Health. Their data tells us that social gatherings are spreading this deadly virus.

And I have listened to leaders in our medical and business community who agree—we must protect our people.

I share in the frustration and the fatigue that many of you are experiencing as a result of this pandemic, I also recognize that my frustration and fatigue cannot compare to the impact this pandemic has had on our doctors, our nurses, our first responders, our grocery workers, and the countless others who work everyday to keep our island moving.

COVID-19 has challenged the world. And while it may be true that we have yet to see the worst of this pandemic, we must always seek out the best in our ability to define how we respond.

Think about it... for us, in the Pacific, in our unique community, it is in our nature, in our spirit, in our being to look out for each other and to achieve the common good.

So please understand that we still have a difficult road ahead. And if you're asking how you can help, the answer is—wear your mask, wash your hands, watch your distance, and get vaccinated.

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