



Dear PHCA Families,

You probably have heard in the news that Oahu public schools are keeping their August 17th start date. Through a rotational process, they plan to bring students on campus to train them for distance learning. For some public school families this is a burden, and for others it is a relief, as this is a very emotional topic. You may have also heard the governor say he is "not making any specific recommendations to private schools." Therefore, the PHCA board of directors has decided to continue with in-person school, following all of the safety and sanitation protocols you are already familiar with.

The PHCA board does not take this decision lightly, and therefore, wants to be sure that science and data are the driving factors in deciding in-person education vs distance learning. Therefore, this letter is to share with you the scientific data being considered when making this decision as an organization. It is impossible to eliminate all risk. Just driving our families around in cars is a risk, but we do what we can to understand and minimize the risks we take every day (driving, medications, vaccinations, swimming, amusement parks, bicycles, etc.).

(1) Scientific study that shows near zero risk for children:

Study: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27597.pdf>

This study shows the high fatality rate for those over 85 years of age who catch COVID. It also shows an elevated risk for those over 45 years old with COVID. For children (and those under age 34) the risk is VERY low, only .01%. As pointed out in this study, the risk of death for a child in an auto accident is also .01%. Since nearly every child in Hawaii is driven around in cars, nearly all of these children have this level of risk of death, so the risk remains at .01%. For a COVID risk assessment calculation, let's start with an 18% risk of catching the virus. This percent is based on the fully tested population of the Diamond Princess cruise ship (3711 passengers, all of them tested, 17.9% of the population tested positive) and is in line with other studies that calculate herd immunity percentages. So with the assumption of children in Hawaii having an 18% chance of catching COVID (which is exponentially higher than the current rate of infection in Hawaii), and there is .01% of dying from it (from this study) ... here is the math: $.18 \times .0001 = .000018$ or .0018%. Thus, children are 5.6 times more likely to die from an auto accident than from COVID, yet we still drive our families around every day. We know the benefit of car travel outweighs the risk, so we don't allow this low risk from stopping us from using our cars every day. In addition, children are 16.7 times more likely to die from "all other accidents" than from COVID. And both of these comparisons are based on an 18% infection rate, which is 80 times higher than the current rate in Hawaii; thus based on a VERY conservative comparison.

From the study:

"This paper assesses the age specificity of the infection fatality rate (IFR) for COVID-19. Our benchmark meta-regression synthesizes the age-specific IFRs from six recent large-scale seroprevalence studies conducted in Belgium, Geneva, Indiana, New York, Spain, and Sweden. The estimated IFR is close to zero for children..."

Table 4: Age-Specific Fatality Rates for COVID-19 vs. Accidental Injuries			
Age Group	COVID-19 Infection Fatality Rate (%)	Automobile Accident Annualized Fatality Rate (%)	Other Accidental Injury Annualized Fatality Rate (%)
0 to 34	0.01	0.01	0.03
35 to 44	0.04	0.01	0.04
45 to 54	0.2	0.01	0.04
55 to 64	0.7	0.01	0.04
65 to 74	2.4	0.01	0.04
75 to 84	8.9	0.02	0.09
85+	36.8	0.02	0.35

Source: U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (2020)

(2) The risk of students catching COVID and passing it to teachers or passing it to family at home is very low:

Study: <https://www.uvm.edu/uvmnews/news/kids-rarely-transmit-covid-19-say-uvm-docs-top-journal>

From the study:

"The data are striking," said Dr. Raszka. "The key takeaway is that children are not driving the pandemic. After six months, we have a wealth of accumulating data showing that children are less likely to become infected and seem less infectious; it is congregating adults who aren't following safety protocols who are responsible for driving the upward curve."

"Additional support for the notion that children are not significant vectors of the disease comes from mathematical modeling, the authors say. Models show that community-wide social distancing and widespread adoption of facial cloth coverings are far better strategies for curtailing disease spread, and that closing schools adds little. The fact that schools have reopened in many Western European countries and in Japan without seeing a rise in community transmissions bears out the accuracy of the modeling."

(3) But Hawaii is surging in cases ...

Data: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>

Even with the significant jump in cases, Hawaii has THE LOWEST cases per 100,000 population in the nation (which makes for a fair comparison because it adjusts for population size). No other state is lower. In fact, the states with significantly higher cases per 100,000 population are 10 times higher than Hawaii,

even when adjusted for population. Meaning, several states with far greater community spread than Hawaii have safely continued with school openings. In addition, if the "surge" in cases is not a high enough risk to force closures of all other organizations, then schools should not be closed across the board. This is why Governor Ige's said he is "not making any specific recommendations to private schools." In addition, Lt Governor Josh Green mentioned in an interview that private schools have more resources available to implement safety protocols as compared to public schools, which is another reason they can continue to meet in-person. However, the board also knows PHCA needs to be prepared for all scenarios, including distance learning, so the administration will soon be announcing distance learning "practice day" to prepare teachers and students for any possible change in state policies.

(4) CDC recommendation to return to school in the fall:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/reopening-schools.html>

From the report:

"Schools are an important part of the infrastructure of our communities, as they provide safe, supportive learning environments for students, employ teachers and other staff, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. Schools also provide critical services that help meet the needs of children and families, especially those who are disadvantaged, through supporting the development of social and emotional skills, creating a safe environment for learning, identifying and addressing neglect and abuse, fulfilling nutritional needs, and facilitating physical activity. School closure disrupts the delivery of in-person instruction and critical services to children and families, which has negative individual and societal ramifications. The best available evidence from countries that have opened schools indicates that COVID-19 poses low risks to school-aged children, at least in areas with low community transmission, and suggests that children are unlikely to be major drivers of the spread of the virus. Reopening schools creates opportunity to invest in the education, well-being, and future of one of America's greatest assets—our children—while taking every precaution to protect students, teachers, staff and all their families."

The PHCA board of directors takes this decision very seriously. It is sad that we have to analyze and interpret fatality rates of this disease as compared to other life activities, but emotions have been run up so high we have to take a step back and allow the science and the data to guide what is best for the next generation. It's not as simple as "the safest thing is to stay home". Keeping kids isolated for extended periods of time presents new risks, as outlined by the CDC and other pediatric organizations. It's not one path has risks and the other path is perfectly safe. All activities have risk trade-offs. The board believes this data confirms in-person school is still the best option, and the board prays this information gives you confidence in that decision as well.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derald Skinner', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Pastor Derald Skinner
Board President