

April 15, 2020

Salary Commission  
City and County of Honolulu  
530 S. King Street, Room 202M  
Honolulu, HI. 96813

Via Email Only: ryoung5@honolulu.gov

Re: April 16, 2020 Salary Commission Agenda

Dear Chair Sakamoto, Vice Chair Tamamoto, and Members of the Salary Commission:

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. Transparency in government is key to a healthy and strong democracy. Common Cause Hawaii provides the below comments regarding the April 16, 2020 Salary Commission Agenda.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the entire State is under a stay-at-home, work-from-home order, according to Governor Ige's Third Supplemental Emergency Proclamation dated March 23, 2020, and the City and County of Oahu is under a stay-at-home, work-from-home order, pursuant to Mayor Caldwell's Emergency Order No. 2020-02 dated March 22, 2020, both with certain exceptions.

By Gov. Ige's Supplemental Emergency Proclamation dated March 16, 2020, the open meetings law was suspended. "Boards[, however,] shall consider reasonable measures to allow public participation consistent with social distancing practices, such as providing notice of meetings, allowing submission of written testimony on agenda items, live streaming meetings, and posting minutes of meetings online." See Governor Ige's March 116, 2020 Supplemental Emergency Proclamation [https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2003109-ATG\\_COVID-19-Supplementary-Proclamation-signed.pdf](https://governor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2003109-ATG_COVID-19-Supplementary-Proclamation-signed.pdf) at pg. 3.

The Salary Commission, unfortunately, will not even be conducting its April 16, 2020 meeting according to these minimal guidelines. The Salary Commission will not be livestreaming its April 16, 2020 meeting. This is unacceptable and a blatant disregard of transparency and the public's right to know.

Further, according to the April 16, 2020 Salary Commission's Agenda, the public may be able to submit written testimony, but no oral testimony will be allowed. Not permitting real-time testimony **through remote access** denies the public true participation in our democracy. Certain matters may arise during discussions between the Salary Commission members at the April 16, 2020 public meeting, which were not contemplated by a pre-written public testimony. This is why public oral, remote participation (for the health and safety of everyone) at meetings is so vitally important. Public, oral, and remote participation – interacting and having an exchange with our elected and government officials – is the cornerstone of our democracy.

The public should be allowed to participate remotely at government meetings during this time of public health crisis. There are many proven technologies – Zoom, GoToMeeting, BlueJeans, etc. – which will permit remote access by the public. Allowing the public to participate remotely at the April 16, 2020 Salary Commission meeting is vitally important, given that raises for city officials will be discussed, which is a matter of great interest to the citizenry.

Common Cause Hawaii recommends the following guidelines to allow for true public participation and ensure governmental transparency:

- Postpone routine, non-priority government action until the state of emergency has ended.
- Provide widespread public notice of scheduled government proceedings.
- Provide public access to observe government proceedings via live and recorded video available on government websites.
- Provide public ability to participate in government proceedings via videoconference where possible and, at a minimum, via telephone and submission of written testimony.
- Require all members of the public participating in a meeting or proceeding to be clearly audible and visible at all times, including to the public.
- At the start of the meeting, require the chair to announce the names of any members of the public body participating remotely.
- In the event audio or video coverage of a proceeding or meeting is interrupted, require the presiding official to suspend discussion until audio/video is restored.
- Require all votes to be roll call votes.
- At the beginning of any executive session, require all members of the public body to state that no other person is present or can hear them.
- Record all open sessions of meetings and make such recordings available to the public via a government website.

Common Cause Hawaii respectfully requests that the Salary Commission amends its April 16, 2020 Agenda notice as requested herein and follow the suggested guidance provided by Common Cause Hawaii. We stand ready to support in promoting accountability, transparency, and ethics in our government institutions. Democracy and transparency matter even more in times of crisis.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma  
Executive Director  
Common Cause Hawaii