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The rise in Covid-19 cases continues to be an issue of great and serious concern for our State and our police officers who are working every day on the front lines. As police officers, we are also concerned with the dire situation the pandemic has created in our hospitals and the steady and exponential growth of Covid-19 infections Statewide. What is also of utmost and critical importance is the strain placed on our police officers and the extreme anxiety they have had to endure caused by the Covid-19 mandates imposed on them by the various county employers.

While SHOPO continues to encourage the community at large to get vaccinated, as the majority of its members have done, SHOPO also respects and continues to stand with those members who hold strong personal convictions for objecting to the mandatory vaccination and testing policies imposed on them by the employer, including their belief that it should be a personal choice and not a mandate to be vaccinated. The freedom of choice for each individual to decide what goes into their body must not be treated with disdain by our leaders.

With Department requirements for proof of vaccination and testing for unvaccinated officers, SHOPO had been working diligently and expeditiously and utilizing its available resources to determine an appropriate course of action to protect our members. As your union representative, we take your rights and concerns seriously. We know that for some of you, the decision to vaccinate is complicated and personal. However, let it be known that SHOPO will vigorously defend and protect the collective bargaining rights of any member who is unjustly subjected to discipline under these mandates.

The conversations and attempts to negotiate with our respective county Mayors continue. Although Governor Ige suspended the statute relating to our collective bargaining right to negotiate, we have nonetheless pressed and demanded that the counties negotiate with us. Trying to address and resolve the unknown protocols under the short fuse we were given which many of you have questioned, such as the criteria and vetting process for the medical and religious exemptions, the unknown disciplinary procedures which we may all be subjected to if we do not comply with the various protocols, has been a top priority which our chapter chairs and State Board of Directors have been fully engaged in and pursuing with the utmost urgency from day one when the governor's proclamation was announced and the subsequent vaccination and testing directives were issued by the Mayors.

Your SHOPO officials are working hard to keep our conversations and lines of communication open with our Mayors in order to mitigate and do our best to resolve the anticipated hardships we will all likely face with the vaccination and testing mandates. As you know, each of you have chapter representatives with whom you can convey and explain your concerns and thoughts. If you have an idea or solution to offer, please do not hesitate to make it known so that it can be considered. Many of you have never attended a chapter or State board meeting, however, please know that we are here for you as we must maintain our unity and strength during this time of crisis even if we have differing opinions about the mandates. If any member is disciplined or threatened with discipline by your employer relating to the vaccination and testing mandates, SHOPO needs to know immediately so a grievance can be initiated and recorded as time is of the essence with the contract grievance process. For your information, Article 32.I.2. sets forth the details of the 20 calendar day time limit in which a grievance must be served in writing on the employer. If you have any questions about this, please do not hesitate contacting any one of our SHOPO business agents who can answer any questions you may have about the grievance process and who will also file the written grievance for you.

I pray that everyone stays safe and healthy.

Aloha,

MALCOLM LUTU
President