



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY  
1000 NAVY PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20305-1000

24 December 2021

The Honorable Kaiali'i Kahele  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kahele:

Thank you for your continued support and advocacy for the community that has been affected by the drinking water contamination situation at Red Hill. I am grateful for your partnership and your perspective.

Thank you for your letter of December 23, 2021, expressing your concerns regarding the comments made by Mr. James Balocki during the Department of Health hearing held on Monday, December 20, 2021. Specifically, you identified comments which suggested Mr. Balocki did not fully appreciate the gravity of the situation for our personnel, their families, and the Hawai'ian people as a result of the drinking water contamination situation at Red Hill.

Nothing is more important than the health, safety, and well-being of our personnel, their families, and our community neighbors. We understand that they are hurting, and we are committed to working side-by-side with hundreds of Navy, interagency, and local Hawai'ian officials to address the drinking water contamination situation in the most rapid and informed way possible. We are fully committed to restoring the water system, and we are bringing together the full resources of the Department and our interagency partners (Federal, state, and local) to address the range of issues the community faces. Together, we are working every day with steadfast determination to ensure safe drinking water for our communities and to get families back home.

I have personally spoken to Mr. Balocki, and he is remorseful for his choice of words during the hearing. Jim fully appreciates the pain his words have caused, and he regrets that he did not reflect empathy or understanding for the substantial impact of this situation on both people and the environment.

On behalf of the entire Department of the Navy, we are sincerely sorry. We will work tirelessly until the drinking water contamination situation at Red Hill is resolved. Our team remains in critical response mode to ensure we are effective, swift, and comprehensive in all of our lines of effort, from support to families and residents to remediation.

Please know that I remain available to you, the delegation, and the people of Hawai'i, and committed to our work for the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Meredith Berger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Meredith" and last name "Berger" clearly distinguishable.

Meredith Berger  
Assistant Secretary of the Navy  
(Energy, Installations and Environment)  
Performing the Duties of the  
Under Secretary of the Navy