Aloha, Friend.

We are in a difficult, unsettling time. After two pandemic years, we had all hoped for a better normal. But new COVID variants, inflation, crime, Ukraine, inequality, division, and more are complicating that.

On the plus side, we are coming through COVID, with our Hawai‘i doing well both healthwise and with over $20 billion of federal aid, and with our economy and employment almost all the way back. We are on track toward closure of Red Hill. We had an excellent result in the Fiscal Year 2022 federal appropriations process. These persistent and new challenges are disappointing, but we can’t afford to get stuck in disappointment.

We’ve worked through COVID and many other challenges, and we can and must do so again.

We all have a role, but our federal government is our central effort together. As your U.S. Representative, my own role remains to work in Congress to (1) contribute to national leadership for our country and world, (2) assure that our Hawaii’s own needs are met, and (3) assist you with your individual concerns.

On Capitol Hill, I use every tool at my disposal, from my seniority, experience and relationships to my membership on committees like Appropriations, responsible for all federal discretionary funding, and more, to fulfill my mission. But my efforts are always grounded in staying connected with you and our communities back home, keeping you informed of what I’m doing and why, listening to your concerns, answering your questions, and helping you however we can.

Here I again summarize just some of my efforts, invite you to another of my live, open Tele-Talk Stories on June 13th, and ask for your continued guidance.

Working together, we can and will forge a better path forward. Mahalo!
I joined my Hawai‘i delegation colleagues in introducing legislation to close Red Hill, and in March the Secretary of Defense announced that the facility will close. We are working through remediation, defueling, closure and replacement fuel storage capacity as quickly and safely as possible. My focus has remained on assuring the billions of funding required. We secured $1.14 billion in our FY22 appropriations measure. The President has requested a further $1 billion for FY23, also one of my top requests in Appropriations. Completing all aspects of Red Hill will remain one of my top priorities.

RUSSIA'S INVASION OF UKRAINE
Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, an unjustified and unprovoked attack not only on a sovereign, independent country but on democracy and an international rules-based order that has largely kept the peace and lifted up billions over the last three generations, cannot stand. Whether or not Russia succeeds will largely determine whether we face other Ukrainians by Russia or its fellow authoritarian countries throughout our world. I have joined most of my colleagues in Congress in supporting tens of billions in emergency funding to Ukraine, sanctions and other efforts. Back home, I have sought to waive the Jones Act sources of funding for our Honolulu Police Department for High Intensity Drug Trafficking (HIDTA), which are major sources of funding for our Honolulu Police Department and their partners statewide.

INFLATION
We are all feeling the pain of the highest inflation in decades, especially our food, housing, energy and gas prices. Unfortunately there’s no silver bullet to end inflation now, as it is resulting from a number of related factors including increased demand, continuing shortages in housing and goods and supply chain disruptions, Ukraine, low interest rates and federal COVID-19 emergency assistance still in our economy. In Congress, besides Hawai‘i’s own specific energy and other challenges, I’m focused on opening up supply chains, curbing unjustifiable price increases like prescription drugs, and restricting further federal spending to only what’s necessary so as not to worsen inflation.

CRIME
We are also seeing a disturbing increase in crime. Our federal government has a major role in preventing and prosecuting crime, and I have focused in Appropriations on assuring funding for these critical programs. These include, in FY22, $3.9 billion in grants to state and local law enforcement, including $675 million for Byrne-JAG, $312 million for Community Oriented Policing (COPS), and $297 million for High Intensity Drug Trafficking (HIDTA), which are major sources of funding for our Honolulu Police Department and their partners statewide.