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**Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women  
Annual Report  
Submitted by Catherine Betts  
Executive Director**

**July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013**

Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) 367-1 details the findings of the Legislature on the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, with specific reference to developing long range goals, coordinating research planning, programming and action on the opportunities, needs, problems and contributions of women in Hawaii. HRS 367-3 further details the specific purposes of the Commission. The work of the Commission is outlined below, according to the state mandates as outlined in HRS 367-3 (1) through HRS 367-3 (8).

367-3 (1): Act as a central clearinghouse and coordinating body for governmental and nongovernmental activities and information relating to the status of women;

367-3 (2): Create public awareness and understanding of the responsibilities, needs, potentials and contributions of women and their roles in the changing society;

367-3 (3): Recommend legislative and administrative action on equal treatment and opportunities for women;

367-3 (4): Encourage a long-range program of education of women in their political rights and responsibilities, particularly with respect to their voting duties;

367-3 (5): Maintain contacts with appropriate federal, state, local and international agencies concerned with the status of women;

367-3 (6): Cooperate and collaborate with national groups on the status of women and arrange for participation by representatives of the State in White House conferences and other national conferences from time to time;

367-3 (7) Administer funds allocated for its work; be authorized to accept, disburse, and allocate funds that may become available from other governmental and private sources; provided that all such funds shall be disbursed or allocated in compliance with any specific designation stated by the donor and in the absence of such specific designation, such funds shall be disbursed or allocated on projects related to any of the purposes of this chapter.

This report is submitted pursuant to HRS 367-3 (8), which provides that the Commission shall submit an annual report with recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature.

This year, the Commission has worked to expand its reach through coalition and capacity building, programming, legislative and community advocacy, trainings, advertising and use of social media. Between 2011 and 2013, the Commission was successful in building community participation in the Hawaii Women's Coalition, which advocates for policies affecting women and girls in Hawaii. Additionally, the Commission performed outreach to interested organizations on the Neighbor Islands and forged new relationships with emerging advocacy groups. Further, the Commission was instrumental in developing trainings and uplifting the connections between Title IX and violence against women in educational institutions. Through a strategic planning session with community stakeholders, the Commission has identified four focal areas to focus on for the next three years: 1) gender-based violence and women's safety; 2) women in elected office and voting rights; 3) ensuring access to healthcare; and 4) pay equity and support for working women. As we pay close attention to these focal areas, we have moved forward in the following ways.

#### I. Coalition Building

The Commission worked to expand the reach of the community list serve to over 200 different organizations statewide. The Commission additionally sought out new organizations to develop relationships with individuals and organizations that care about issues affecting Hawaii's women and girls and are committed to making good social change on their behalves. Additionally, the Commission has used this new reach to educate the public about the Commission and current issues affecting women and girls.

This last year, the Commission convened community organizations and individuals for

the Hawaii Women's Coalition:

Department of Health  
Planned Parenthood of Hawaii  
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies  
Breastfeeding League of Hawaii  
Joyful Heart Foundation  
Family Peace Center  
Drug Policy Forum of Hawaii  
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Caucus of Hawaii  
League of Women Voters  
Association of American University Women  
American Civil Liberties Union  
Gender Equity Office-UH Manoa  
Bridge to Hope Program-UH Manoa  
Office of Hawaiian Affairs  
Community Alliance on Prisons  
Military Veterans Taskforce  
Kokua Kalihi Valley  
Zonta Women's Group-International  
United Nations Program on Violence Against Women (Pacific region)  
UH-Commission on the Status of Women  
Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women  
Maui County Committee on the Status of Women  
Hawaii County Committee on the Status of Women  
Domestic Violence Action Center  
Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
Sex Abuse Treatment Center  
YWCA of Hawaii  
William S. Richardson School of Law

## II. National Advocacy

The Commission became a member of the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), a leading research organization for issues and trends related to women. Historically, the IWPR has assisted various states with research and has created data sheets entitled the "Status of Women in Hawaii". The Commission relies on this data when making policy recommendations.

The Commission coordinated a strategic meeting with the United Nations Violence Against Women Program Specialist for the Pacific region, which resulted in advocates, policy

makers and direct services representatives meeting and discussing emerging trends throughout the Pacific.

The Commission advocated for the reauthorization of VAWA 2013 by beginning a phone call and email campaign with community members and meeting with the offices of Senator Mazie Hirono and Congresswoman Colleen Hanabusa.

The Commission participated in the National Dialogue on Workplace Flexibility, which was lead and sponsored by the United States Department of Labor-Women's Bureau. The dialogue focused on striving for greater workplace flexibility and closing the gender wage gap.

### III. Legislative Advocacy

This year, the Commission celebrated some successful achievements in the areas of policy and legislation that truly benefit the women and girls of Hawaii. The Executive Director of the Commission serves as co-chair of the Hawaii Women's Coalition ("Coalition"). As co-chair, the Executive Director convenes Coalition meetings between the months of August (prior to session) until June (subsequent to session). Additionally, the Commission assists in reviewing and drafting policy and alerts the community to hearing notices and calls for testimony via email. The Commission also assists the Coalition logistically, by providing information and resources to the Coalition, which is often largely comprised of community volunteers. The following bills originated from the Hawaii Women's Coalition bill package and in turn, were voted on and successfully adopted into the Hawaii Women's Legislative Caucus bill package.

Emergency Contraception for Sexual Assault Victims: Established a new part in chapter 321, HRS, to ensure that victims of sexual assault are provided with medically and factually unbiased information about and access to emergency contraception when receiving emergency medical care at Hawaii's hospitals for sexual assault. (H.B. 411 enacted as Act 27, SLH 2013)

Workplace Protections for Breastfeeding Employees: Requires certain employers to provide reasonable time and private location for breastfeeding employees to express breast milk, requires covered employers to post a notice and establishes a civil fine for each violation. (S.B. 532 enacted as Act 249, SLH 2013)

Domestic Workers Bill of Rights: Establishes basic rights and protections for domestic workers and prohibits discrimination. (S.B. 535 enacted as Act 248, SLH 2013)

The Coalition also supported bills that were introduced by the Administration, the Women’s Legislative Caucus, and other legislators that aligned with key issues impacting women and families.

Extension of Foster Care: Establishes the young adult voluntary foster care program to care for and supervise eligible foster youth until age twenty-one. Allows foster youth the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to becoming a self-sufficient young adult. (S.B. 1340 containing the language of the Administration bill enacted as Act 252, SLH 2013)

Relating to Eliminating the Asset Limit Eligibility Requirements for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TAN) Program: Eliminated the asset limit for TANF eligibility to allow poor and working families to build assets rather than getting rid of them to remain eligible for financial assistance. (Administration bill H.B. 868 enacted as Act 18, SLH 2013)

Relating to Parental Rights of Convicted Rapists: Prohibits family courts from awarding custody of or visitation with a child to a natural parent who has been convicted of rape or sexual assault that resulted in the child’s conception. Also authorizes the Family Courts to terminate parental rights of the convicted natural parent. (Women’s Legislative Caucus bill, S.B. 529 enacted as Act 253, SLH 2013)

Expedited Partner Therapy: Allows health professionals, subject to certain requirements, to treat the partners of patients diagnosed as having certain sexually transmitted diseases by dispensing or prescribing medication to the partners without examining the partners. (S.B. 655 enacted as Act 250, SLH 2013)

Additionally, the Commission and the Coalition tracked and provided testimony on the following measures (which did not pass):

Paid Sick and Safe Leave

Relating to Civil Rights (Biased Based Policing)

Mandatory Reporting/Trafficking

Exemption from Jury Duty for Breastfeeding Mothers

Relating to New Certificates of Birth for Individuals Who Identify as Transgender

Relating to an Increase in the Minimum Wage

Relating to the Issuance of Temporary Restraining Orders via Electronic Application

Relating to Structured Community Placement for Non Violent Female Offenders

Relating to a Maternal Mortality Review Committee

Comprehensive Sex Education in the DOE

#### IV. Community Advocacy

The Commission serves as an advocate for individuals and groups in the community who may need assistance in certain matters. This last year, the Commission worked with individuals to provide information on sexual assault resources, female-owned small business start-ups,

domestic violence, women and voting rights, Title IX related issues in educational institutions, sexual harassment and the workplace, pay equity, and sexual violence on college campuses.

#### V. Voting Rights and Encouraging Political Office

This year, the Commission re-established contact with the “Ready to Run” Program (Rutgers University Center for Women in Politics) to begin planning the “Ready to Run” conference for November 2013. The “Ready to Run” program helps to encourage and prepare women to run for political and elected office. The program seeks to educate women in areas like social media readiness, building funds for campaigning and preparation for media interviews. Additionally, the Commission held statewide voter registration events to educate the public about voter registration deadlines and absentee voter forms, and to encourage the public to register to vote.

#### VI. Programs/Events

The Commission worked to co-sponsor and collaborate with other organizations to put on the following events in the last year:

- Co-Sponsored Title IX and sexual violence education program at YWCA (July 2012)
- Co-Sponsored Fair Housing/Discrimination event (September 2012)
- Co-Sponsored Bridge to Hope/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Education Brown Bag (Hawaii State Bar Association, October 2012)
- Guest lecturer on public policy and gender for University of Hawaii at Manoa’s Social Work distance learning class (reaching students on Maui, Lanai, Molokai and Kauai)
- Guest lecturer at Leeward Community College on Title IX
- Organizer/Planner/Sponsor: Lobby Day for Women’s Health (Hawaii State Legislature, January 2013)
- Sponsored Let’s Talk About Sex Film Screening at YWCA
- Co-sponsored visit by Dr. Beth Richie focusing on female incarceration, with Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Joyful Heart Foundation, Community Alliance on Prisons and TJ Mahoney (March 2013)
- Sponsored live presentation of The Prison Monologues (Women’s History Month/March 2013)
- Co-Sponsored Women of Wonders Film Festival at the Arts at Mark’s Garage (Women’s History Month, March 2013)
- Sponsored Youth Women’s Network (at the YWCA of Oahu) program for young women in Hawaii and the “Girls Circle”

- Sponsored North Shore Women's Pipe Pro-Hawaii's only professional surfing contest for women
- Co-Sponsored Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women's Bullying Prevention Panel
- Co-Sponsored Domestic Violence Awareness Month-Proclamation Signing and Annual Breakfast

## VII. Neighbor Island Programming and Events

### **Hawaii:**

- Assisted in published 20,000 Urgent Services Directories for Women and Families (June 2012)
- Sponsored Walk a Mile in Her Shoes-Y-WALK
- Sponsored essay contest entitled "Inspiring Women" for all intermediate public schools
- Co-Sponsored Hui Malama O Na Iwi-Ladies Night Out-dedicated to improving the health of native Hawaiian community on Hawaii island (September 2012)
- Attended Hawaii County Committee Meeting to give legislative updates for upcoming session (January 2013)
- Sponsored Historical Trauma conference re: Domestic Violence within the Filipino community (March 2013)
- Radio Ads: teen pregnancy prevention and dating violence prevention ads ran throughout last two weeks of May 2013
- Sponsored First Annual Pride Parade in Hilo (June 2013)
- Created and produced four audio public service announcements regarding teen dating violence prevention and teen pregnancy prevention. Each PSA aired on radio stations statewide in an effort to have the broadest reach (June 10, 2013 to June 23, 2013)

### **Maui:**

- Attended Maui County Committee meeting to provide legislative updates and overview of Coalition package
- Sponsored Maui County Committee History Month event, honoring women in STEM (March 2013)

## VIII. Conferences

- Hawaii Youth Services Network Legislative Conference (September 2012)
- Civil Justice for Victims of Crime Conference (December 2012)
- Domestic Violence/"What's Love Got to Do With It" Panel at the William S. Richardson School of Law (February 2013)
- Keynote Speaker Patsy Mink Legislative Fellowship at the William S. Richardson School of Law (March 2013)

## IX. Working Groups/Taskforces

- The Commission participated in the following working groups and taskforces:
- Hawaii State Coalition Against Domestic Violence/Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM)
- University of Hawaii Commission on the Status of Women (monthly meeting)
- University of Hawaii Commission on the Status of Women Health Conference planning committee

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Working Group  
Victim Services/Implementation of Justice Reinvestment Initiative Working Group  
Family Court/Legal Interventions Working Group  
Family Court Working Group  
Women's Advocacy Circles at the YWCA  
Prison Monologues Working Group

X. Developing a Research Data Base for Hawaii

The Commission has begun collecting data and resources to ensure that we serve Hawaii as a functional informational resource for Hawaii. The Commission has partnered with national and local organizations to begin building a research database for local and national statistical information for women, including information on pay equity and gender discrimination in the workplace, pregnancy discrimination, Title IX, women in STEM fields, minimum wage issues, domestic violence and sexual assault and women's health.

Recommendations

Through the work of the Commission, several issues affecting women and girls in Hawaii have rendered closer scrutiny and attention.

1. Violence Against Women

While we have various State and federal laws purporting to protect women and girls from violence, domestic violence and sexual assault persist at an epidemic rate in Hawaii. Although HRS 846-51, (Hawaii's hate crimes statute) has long included gender and gender identity/expression in its protected groups, violence against women is hardly ever understood in the context of hate crimes. Crimes based on gender animus, specifically, one's gender expression as a female, include domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, harassment and stalking. However, these criminal acts against women in Hawaii are not treated as hate crimes. The Commission recommends that law enforcement, the Judiciary, governmental and non-governmental organizations and advocates should convene to discuss best practices



and new innovations in identifying, preventing, and prosecuting violence against women in all forms.

Finally, the Commission recommends that greater energy and resources are utilized on public awareness about violence against women, thereby assisting in prevention of violence.

## 2. Pay Equity

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, women in Hawaii make roughly 82 cents/dollar (compared to men). Most current studies reveal that workplace and hiring discrimination can largely account for the persistence of pay inequity. The Commission recommends more infrastructural changes within workplaces to prevent discrimination and more education within the private sphere to ensure that employers know discrimination is illegal. Additionally, educational practices should be in place to inform employees about their rights and recourse if they are discriminated against.

An increase in the minimum wage is also recommended in order to alleviate the pay gap between men and women. The pay gap is often concentrated in low wage jobs. According to the IWPR, 2/3 of minimum wage workers and workers in tipped occupations are women. Raising the minimum wage would help close this gap.

## 3. Paid Family Leave/Caregiver Leave

Families, as socio-cultural institutions, are revered and treasured in Hawaii. Many of our families care for children and elders simultaneously. Many grandparents provide regular childcare to their grandchildren and many extended families act as foster caregivers for children who cannot remain in the family home. However, under our own Hawaii Family Leave Act, only employers with 100 or more employees are required under law to provide any unpaid time off for family leave.

Many working individuals cannot afford to take unpaid leave for family leave. The Commission believes that paid family leave is paramount for a family to thrive, both socio-economically and physically. Employees should not have to risk being fired or having to leave a paying job in order to take care of a family member. Further, the majority of people who still assume “care giving” responsibilities are women. Women should not be forced out of the workplace because they also provide care for their family when it’s most needed.