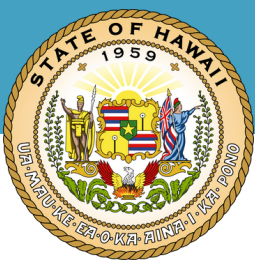


From the
HAWAI'I STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

2023

HAWAI'I WOMEN'S EQUALITY ROADMAP

A TEN POINT PLAN FOR GOVERNOR GREEN



Introduction

This plan was developed from over half a decade of lessons learned helping women's advocacy in Hawai'i as the Executive Director of the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women.

This plan was also informed by a comprehensive analysis of global measurements to track progress on women's equality measurements such as the Gender Equality Index, Global Gender Gap Index, Social Institutions and Gender Index, UN Sustainable Development Goal #5 and Institute for Women's Policy Research's Status of Women in the States.

Hawai'i typically performs well in national rankings for women due to capitalist metrics such as having the highest percentage of female-owned businesses, highest life expectancy, lowest homicide rate, and lowest health care uninsured rate. Yet the quality of life for women who are not business owners remains alarmingly poor.

Due to slowing economic growth coupled with less wealth distribution, women's struggle to survive in Hawai'i is intensifying. Women and girls in Hawai'i face violence on a mass scale, must contend with the third-least affordable housing market in the nation, and earn extremely low wages relative to other high-cost states. Hawai'i is the fourth worst state for women's employment after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Progress on gender equality has stalled in the United States except in educational attainment. Correcting this course locally will require a focus on raising certain gender equality indicators. This plan is cognizant of needed corrections and is the key to continuity in the government's work for women. The following are huge but doable strides toward women's equality in Hawai'i during your administration:

The Plan

1. Modernize women's advocacy to be more scientific by developing a Women's Equality Index specific to Hawai'i that measures progress or backsliding on the status of women.

1. Release an annual report card on women's status in Hawai'i. The report should avoid flawed measurements like the "federal poverty line" and must provide gendered analysis of official definitions of "affordable" and "poverty."
2. Institutionalize gender disaggregated data collection across state government. Create a universal training on how to collect gender and sex information.
3. Survey the general population because the government is a service provider. End-user experiences are key to any accurate reporting of the current status of women. Even corporations engage in consumer feedback. The report should include an annual Hawai'i-wide survey from women in the community-at-large to identify needs, gaps, challenges and opportunities for women. Surveying the general population to reach at least 2,000 women would cost approximately \$20,000-30,000 in partnership with the University of Hawai'i. Data analysis and report drafting would be \$15,000. The annual cost estimate is approximately \$50,000. The report should be made available to the public and easily accessible.
4. Metrics and scorecards institutionalized in government are a form of infrastructure for women.

The Plan

2. Avoid data fetishism and obsessive quantification of women's problems.

From experience, requests for more data or disaggregated data are one of the most common delaying tactics to excuse inaction on women's rights. Collecting data has become an end in itself. Certain issues like paid family leave models have been researched to death in Hawai'i and have been funded to the tune of half a million dollars from the state and federal government. HSCSW has also spent the last five years creating a body of research on sex trafficking. While we should continue to investigate these crises, action on prevention modalities is the more urgent need.

3. Stop wasting time on partial, peripheral solutions to the gender pay gap that ignore the pregnancy penalty.

The biggest barriers to equal pay for women are (1) the absence of paid family leave and (2) the lack of government provision of free childcare in Hawai'i. Focus on passing legislation to establish paid family leave and affordable childcare for all.

The Plan

4. Conduct gender impact reports on the Governor's budget and major public works to understand and prevent repercussions on women that may arise from the proposal.

See *Gambling With Women's Safety: A Feminist Assessment of the Proposed Resort-Casino* for an example of a local gender impact report: https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/1.26.21-r2.1.21-GIS-FINAL_DHHL-Casino.pdf. This will help to mainstream gender analysis beyond the silo of the Commission on the Status of Women.

5. Create an intra-government group of women leaders across Departments of the Executive Branch.

This will allow for women in government decision-making roles to consolidate power and work together to ensure women's rights are being implemented across competing goals and departments. This will encourage representation (i.e., diverse composition of government as a workplace) is more meaningful and accountable to everyday women's interests. This will also address the State of Hawai'i as an employer that continues to maintain anti-women and anti-family policies and practices.

The Plan

6.Center Native Hawaiian rights in all women’s advocacy to ensure Native Hawaiians are not overlooked or harmed by the State’s services, programs, and policies related to women.

1. Integrate a Native Hawaiian gender justice framework to all issues.
 - a. Collect data on Native Hawaiian women to pinpoint possible inequalities on specific issues (e.g. domestic violence, housing, maternal health, etc.)
 - b. Educate government actors on inequalities related to Native Hawaiian women and girls and hold public bodies accountable for their policies and practices.
 - c. Inform government actors and connected stakeholders on how to correct inequalities related to Native Hawaiian women and girls.
 - d. Create a process with Native Hawaiian leaders to encourage sustained, genuine collaboration and co-governance.
 - e. Continue to pursue legislation that mandates Native Hawaiian rights training with a gender lens for government employees.

The Plan

#6 continued...

2. Prioritize the Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls crisis.

- a. Support the needs of the unfunded Missing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women and Girls Taskforce. HSCSW was able to secure \$150,000 in private funding, which is supporting multiple paid consultants for the taskforce. Government should at least match this amount for future work.
- b. Focus on the military as a mega-employer and industry with unique aggravating factors for sex trafficking. Law enforcement cooperation between the Hawai'i State Department of the Attorney General and Department of Defense (DOD) is not enough to tackle this problem. There is a gap between Military Code of Uniform Conduct and implementation. DOD has strong policies but is not doing the necessary awareness-raising, training, and enforcement to make these policies meaningful. Simply sanctioning people who get caught is not effective. Leaders like Admiral Aquilino have not yet agreed to meet with the MMNHWG Taskforce or make a public statement of zero tolerance, which was requested by HSCSW in 2022. The State should: (1) enhance deterrence with a public statement by top US-Indo-Pacom leaders of zero tolerance for sex buying, sex trafficking, child porn consumption and sex with minors arranged online ("enticement"); (2) signage at entry and exit of bases and bathrooms against sex buying at all Hawai'i military installations; (3) data sharing by DOD on gender based violence by base; and (4) an anti-trafficking campaign across all U.S. military installations.
- c. Overcome HIDOE resistance to implementing practical, non-discriminatory sexual health education to educate boys not to buy, beat, or pimp women, girls, and gender oppressed people with public awareness campaigns and curriculum. The onus should not be on girls to avoid being victimized.

The Plan

7. End the neglect and under-resourcing of gender-based violence prevention. Direct services remain underfunded as well, but prevention work is not being done in any meaningful or effective way.

1. Domestic violence intervention programming is limited to individuals mandated by courts and requires justice system involvement—this is deeply flawed and all but guarantees rampant domestic violence for the foreseeable future.
2. Mandate sex trafficking and child sexual abuse training in all DOE schools for staff and students. As advocates say, “If talking about sexual violence makes parents uncomfortable, imagine how uncomfortable it is for a child to be sexually abused and show up to school everyday.” Rethink, redesign and rename the “Erin’s Law” campaign which has failed every year for about a decade.
3. Execute a plan to shrink the sex trade by simultaneously reducing men’s demand and women’s vulnerabilities. Destigmatize women selling sex themselves. Stigmatize men who buy sex from economically and socially marginalized people. Decriminalize women and gender oppressed people who are prostituting due to a poverty of choices. Provide a basic income to anyone who seeks to stop prostituting. Eschew “choice feminism” and sex trade expansion. Genuine harm reduction and genuinely harmful industries cannot coexist.

The Plan

8. Improve representation of extremely marginalized groups of women.

Immigrant women, trans women, incarcerated women, women with disabilities, and single mothers are not adequately represented in the women's policy arena. Starting in 2018, HSCSW created a Deaf women's task force, conducted site visits on Women's Community Correctional Center to assess conditions first-hand, and proactively supported legislation to improve the lives of transgender women. This work must continue and grow.

9. Mobilize local government and our Mayors to adapt and implement the CHANGE toolkit across all counties.

See CHANGE toolkit from the City Hub, Network for Gender Equality, and the Mayor's Office of Los Angeles.

The Plan

10. Focus on expanding access to reproductive health care.

1. Remove the prescription requirement for birth control pills.
2. Widen the path to midwifery licensure through the PEP apprenticeship to ensure homebirths do not go underground and Hawai'i-based birth practices are preserved.
3. Create and fund a statewide abortion access coordinator office. Act with a sense of urgency to address the fact that hundreds of thousands of women and pregnant people on our neighbor islands are being left behind and ignored except for by a handful of dedicated health care advocates when it comes to forced pregnancy. Abortion care is not a sub-specialty but an essential health service that must be readily available on all islands.
4. Work to incentivize the Women's Legislative Caucus to support legal abortion as a body.
5. Use the Governor's powerful platform to destigmatize abortion. Create an annual award program that recognizes abortion care providers—doctors and nurses— as Hawai'i's heroes to address the shortage in abortion care providers caused by a legitimate fear of backlash and social stigma.
6. Work to empower community groups and organizations to implement new models of public health reproductive service delivery (e.g. Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies mobile van).

Suggested Citation

Jabola-Carolus, K. (2023). Hawai'i Women's Equality Roadmap: A Ten-Point Plan for Governor Green. Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women: Honolulu, HI



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