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MEDIA RELEASE

NATIVE HAWAIIANS OVER-REPRESENTED IN HAWAI'I'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM *Groundbreaking research shows that Native Hawaiians are more likely to be incarcerated than other racial or ethnic groups in Hawai'i*

HONOLULU, HAWAI'I - The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) released a new report today, *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System*, which examines the impact of the criminal justice system on Native Hawaiians. While detailing how Native Hawaiians are disproportionately impacted at various stages of Hawai'i's criminal justice system, the report also includes first-hand accounts of Native Hawaiian concerns with the criminal justice system and how it affects their families and their culture. Native Hawaiians are the indigenous, native people of Hawai'i. Findings from the report show that the criminal justice system incarcerates Native Hawaiians at a disproportionate rate.

"This crucial research shows the need to address the unfair treatment of Native Hawaiians in our state's criminal justice system," said Clyde Nāmu'o, OHA's chief executive officer. "Native Hawaiians make up almost 40 percent of the population in Hawai'i's prisons and jails. We are more likely to be sent to prison, and for longer periods of time, than nearly every other racial or ethnic community in Hawai'i. OHA strongly supports a fair justice system and this study sets the course for change."

Additional key findings in the report include:

- Of the people serving a prison term in Hawai'i, approximately 50 percent are housed in facilities on the mainland. Of this population, about 41 percent are Native Hawaiian, the most highly-represented group. While incarcerated out of state, these people are further disconnected from their communities, families and culturally appropriate services for re-entry.
- Native Hawaiians do not use drugs at drastically different rates from people of other races or ethnicities, but Native Hawaiians go to prison for drug offenses more often than people of other races or ethnicities.
- Once released from prison, Native Hawaiians experience barriers that prevent them from participating in certain jobs, obtaining a drivers license, voting, continuing education, obtaining housing and keeping a family together.
- Without a sufficient number of culturally appropriate services, Native Hawaiians are not given the best chance at achieving success upon re-entry into the community.

“In 2009 the OHA Board submitted Concurrent Resolutions to the 25th Legislature noting that a study would be helpful in determining the extent, nature and impact of perceived disparities. The Senate urged with the House of Representatives concurring in HCR27HD1, that OHA should contract a nationally respected and objective consulting firm to conduct a study of disparate treatment of Native Hawaiians in Hawai‘i’s criminal justice system. That study is now complete.” said OHA Chairperson Apoliona.

The resulting report provides a number of recommendations to reduce the unfair impact of the justice system on Native Hawaiians, including:

- **Reform the criminal justice system in Hawai‘i to embrace the cultural values of Native Hawaiians.** Changing the justice system so it is in line with culturally significant norms and values will help preserve a historic culture and strengthen the Hawaiian community and its identity.
- **Develop a targeted plan to reduce racial disparities.** One immediate proposal by OHA is the establishment of a task force that will review the findings and recommendations of the report, and formulate policies and procedures to eliminate the disparate treatment of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system. Members of the task force will include OHA, government agencies, legislators, prosecutors, public defenders, the state attorney general, the judiciary, public safety and probation officials, the police, a former prisoner and treatment providers.
- **Concentrate efforts to reduce the punitive nature of the criminal justice system and fund community-based alternatives to incarceration.** Investing in alternatives to incarceration and the investment of funds into re-entry and preventative programs will aid in addressing the disproportionate impact on Native Hawaiians.
- **Reduce collateral consequences associated with criminal justice involvement.** The current system deprives *pa‘ahao* of full integration into the community. Barriers to education, housing, employment and parental rights only serve to increase the likelihood of future re-imprisonment which would further destabilize families and communities.

The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System was written at the request of the Hawai‘i state legislature following the approval of House Concurrent Resolution 27, and was compiled through research by the Washington, D.C.-based Justice Policy Institute (JPI), and experts at the University of Hawai‘i and Georgetown University.

To read the Executive Summary and the full report of *The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiians in the Criminal Justice System* visit www.oha.org/disparatetreatment. For more information on OHA, please visit www.oha.org. If you are interested in reading additional research from the Justice Policy Institute on racial disparities and efforts to reduce the number of people affected by the criminal justice system, please visit www.justicepolicy.org.

About OHA

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) is a unique, independent state agency established through the Hawai'i State Constitution and statutes to advocate for the betterment of conditions of all Native Hawaiians, with a Board of Trustees elected by the voters of Hawai'i. OHA is guided by a

vision and mission to ensure the perpetuation of the culture, to protect the entitlements of Native Hawaiians, and to build a strong and healthy Hawaiian people and nation. For more information, visit www.oha.org.

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Contact: Lloyd Yonenaka
Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Office: 808-594-1982
Mobile: 808-754-0078
Email: lloydy@oha.org

Jason Fenster
Justice Policy Institute
Office: 202-558-7974 ext. 306
Mobile: 202-656-5336
Email: jfenster@justicepolicy.org