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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Hawaii State Advisory Committee to U.S. Commission on  
Civil Rights Issues Report on Native Hawaiian  
Overrepresentation in the Criminal Justice System**

The Hawai'i State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has issued a report, *Is There an Uneven Administration of Justice for Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i?* The study was undertaken by the Hawai'i State Advisory Committee in a follow-up to a public hearing it held in 2010. The report is available on the Commission's website at [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov).

Information and testimony received by the Hawai'i State Advisory Committee from numerous sources including state justice officials show a disproportionately high percentage of Native Hawaiians in the state's criminal justice system. Though Native Hawaiians comprise approximately 20 percent of state's population, they comprise more than 40 percent of the state's prison population.

The Committee noted in its report that the reasons for the disparity are complex and longstanding. For example, Native Hawaiians as a group disproportionately suffer from poverty and unemployment, factors correlated with criminal behavior. Nonetheless, such factors do not adequately explain this disparity with respect to Native Hawaiians, and in fact, this disproportion is a relatively recent phenomenon. Throughout the mid-1950s other immigrant groups in the state exhibited greater disproportions, and Native Hawaiians at that time were underrepresented.

In its report the Committee commends the State of Hawai'i for commissioning studies on this issue. In 2010 the Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) released a preliminary study that examined disparities in the criminal justice system including Native Hawaiians, and a second and more in-depth study of the issue has now been authorized by the state legislature. This is an important civil rights issue that requires not only attention but resolution.

In releasing the report, Chairman Michael Lilly of the Hawai'i State Advisory Committee stated: "In adhering to its statutory mandate to study information relating to discrimination or a denial of equal protection of the laws because of race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin, the Hawai'i State Advisory Committee intends to give the issue of the administration of justice its continued attention. The Committee is resolved not only to assess this issue in its own right, but also

to monitor forthcoming studies from state sanctioned sources as well other independent studies and offer its bipartisan judgment on this important civil rights issue.”

By law, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has established a State Advisory Committee in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. These State Advisory Committees are composed of state citizens who serve without compensation. State Advisory Committees advise the Commission of civil rights issues in their states that are within the Commission’s jurisdiction. State Advisory Committee reports may rely on studies and data generated by third parties, and are not subject to an independent review by Commission staff. The views expressed in State Advisory Committee reports and findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained therein are those of a majority of the State Advisory Committee members and do not necessarily represent the views of the Commission or its individual members, nor do they represent the policies of the U.S. Government.