



**PRESS RELEASE**

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Contact: Ana Victoria Fortes

(202) 681-0857

[afortes@usccr.gov](mailto:afortes@usccr.gov)

**Hawai'i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights  
Releases Report on COVID-19 and its Impact on Pacific Islander  
Communities**

The Hawai'i Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights released a [report](#) following a series of web hearings to understand civil rights concerns with health disparities impacting Pacific Islander communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee heard from the Hawai'i Department of Health, federally qualified health centers Papa Ola Lōkahi and Kōkua Kalihi Valley, advocacy organizations for Pacific Islander communities; members of the religious community; and individuals working directly with Pacific Islander communities.

In this report, the Committee received testimony from speakers in the following areas: the effectiveness of the State of Hawai'i's response in delivering health care during the COVID-19 pandemic; why non-Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19; barriers that prevent non-Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities access to health care; civil rights concerns impacting non-Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities as a result of the pandemic; and potential solutions for addressing health care access for non-Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities and other vulnerable communities impacted by COVID-19.

Through this testimony, the Committee identified several concerns that include likely factors that impact Pacific Islander communities' vulnerability to contracting COVID-19; challenges with government response to the COVID-19 pandemic; the importance of community response and care; discussion about vaccine distribution and advocacy; lack of data collection; and civil rights concerns with disproportionate arrests of Pacific Islanders during the early emergency order.

The report also includes recommendations directed to the Commission asking for corrective actions from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Insular Affairs; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Federal Emergency Management Agency, Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus' Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Task Force; Hawai'i Legislature; Hawai'i Governor; Hawai'i Department of Health; County of Hawai'i Mayor, County of Maui Mayor, County of Kauai Mayor, and City and County of Honolulu Mayor; and Hawai'i state agencies with a goal of helping address the Committee's concerns.

Committee Chair Nalani Fujimori-Kaina stated: "I am so appreciative of the work of the Committee and am grateful for the willingness of our presenters to participate in our hearings. It is through them that we were able to better understand the civil rights

implications that occurred in the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on certain Pacific Islander communities. This study brings to light why the disaggregation of data especially for Asian and Pacific Islanders is so critical. Without accurate data, the ability to respond in a disaster curtails appropriate responses that do not have civil rights implications. It also raised important concerns over the systemic discriminatory experiences which ultimately lead to this disproportionate impact.”

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*The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. For information about the Commission, please visit [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov) and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).*