DEPT. COMM. NO. 256

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

December 31, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Nadine K. Nakamura, Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Nakamura, and Members of the Legislature:

Enclosed is the following report submitted in accordance with section 367-3, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), on the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women.

Per section 93-16, HRS, this report will be available for electronic review on the Department's website at https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/. For questions regarding this report, contact Llasmin Chaine, Executive Director, at lchaine@dhs.hawaii.gov.

Sincerely,

Ryan I. Yamane
Director

Enclosure

c: Governor's Office
Lieutenant Governor's Office
Department of Budget and Finance
Legislative Auditor
Legislative Reference Bureau Library (1 hard copy)
Hawaii State Public Library, System State Publications Distribution Center (2 hard copies, one electronic copy)
Hamilton Library, Serials Department, University of Hawaii (1 hard copy)

REPORT TO THE THIRTY-THIRD HAWAIʻI STATE LEGISLATURE 2026

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 367-3,
HAWAIʻI REVISED STATUTES, ON THE HAWAIʻI STATE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HAWAIʻI STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DECEMBER 2025

ANNUAL REPORT

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fiscal Year 2024 - 2025: July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025

Prepared By:
Llasmin Chaine
Executive Director
December 2025

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Unless otherwise stated, images throughout the Annual Report are from Canva.

STATUS OF WOMEN OVERVIEW



In 1964, Governor John A. Burns created by Executive Order the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW).

The Legislature later established the framework and scope of the State Commission and the County Committees on the Status of Women (CSW) in Chapter 367 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), to enable a continuing statewide program.

This annual report recounts statewide Status of Women efforts, including the University of Hawaii's, during the State fiscal year 2024 - 2025 (FY25)*.

*Please bear in mind, throughout this period, action was hampered and limited due to key staff and member vacancies.

PURPOSE (HRS 367-1) and DUTIES (HRS 367-3)

To aid in the implementation of the legislature's recommendations, to develop long-range goals, and to coordinate research planning, programming, and action on the opportunities, needs, responsibilities, problems, and contributions of women in Hawaii. HSCSW functions as a central clearinghouse of resources, information, and advocacy, assisting with public awareness and policy development.



Graphic: Lifted Creative Studio

HEALTH. SAFETY. OPPORTUNITY. PROGRESS.

STATUS OF WOMEN OVERVIEW

MISSION

Working toward equality for women and girls in Hawaii by acting as a catalyst for positive change through advocacy, education, collaboration and program development.

STATUTORY GOALS and STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Political, economic, and social equality for women and girls.
- Health, safety, equity and access to care.
- Protections against discrimination and gender-based violence.
- State policymaking and programs inclusive of women and girls' viewpoints, experiences and needs.
- Viable and visible female contributions, achievements, and leadership in Hawaii.
- Actions, remedies, and data-driven decision making, to empower, understand and address barriers.



Photo: Microsoft Stock Image

HAWAII COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HONOLULU COUNTY COMMITTEE

KAUAI COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

MAUI COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Logos: Lifted Creative Studio

RESULTS

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

HSCSW participated in events, engaged in public speaking, and cultivated working relationships with women's advocacy groups, organizations, public policy stakeholders, elected officials, public and private agencies, non-profits, and community groups, that address the concerns and needs of women.
Below is a list of meetings and events attended.

- Opening Day of the Legislature
- Hawaii State LGBTQ+ Commission Meetings
- University of Hawaii Commission and Honolulu, Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui County CSW Meetings
- Women's Legislative Caucus Breakfast
- University of Hawaii at Manoa:
  - 50th Anniversary of the Department of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies Event
  - Higher Education Day of Action - Earned Media
- First Lady's International Women's Day Breakfast
- Sexual Assault Awareness Month:
  - Sign-Waving at the Capitol
  - Denim Day Event
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Week of Awareness - Lei Draping Ceremony
- Hawaii League of Women Voters' Biannual Convention
- Title IX Proclamation Ceremony with Mayor Blangiardi and American Association of University Women of Hawaii
- Gender Journeys Day Conference
- Workgroup, Committee, Coalition, and Task Force Meetings



Photo: Lifted Creative Studio

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

RESULTS

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY



24 Testimony Submissions

14 Measures Passed

2 Measures Deferred

SAFETY

[Act 149](#) **(Covered Offender Registration)** - closes the public disclosure loophole on the state's offender registry for those who commit sexual assault in the fourth degree against a minor who is at least sixteen, while they are acting in a professional capacity.

[Act 261](#) **(Sexual Exploitation Safe Harbor Protections)** - ensures survivors of sexual exploitation are not criminalized for their own victimization, shifts Hawaii's policy towards a trauma-informed and survivor-centered approach, and reduces barriers for those seeking medical or law enforcement assistance.

[Act 259](#) **(Civil Remedy for Discriminatory Reporting)** - gives any person injured by discriminatory reporting to a law enforcement officer recourse through civil action, deters the misuse of law enforcement reporting against persons of protected classes, and informs the public accordingly.

[Act 273](#) **(Registered Sex Offenders Automatic Revocation and Denial of Professional Licenses)** - authorizes the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and certain licensing boards to automatically revoke and refuse to renew, restore, or reinstate the professional licenses of registered sex offenders.

[Act 9](#) **(Charges of Promoting Pornography of Minors)** - enhances the effectiveness of investigations and prosecutions of those offenders who promote pornography of minors and reduces charging barriers.

Photo: "Hawaii Life" Website

RESULTS

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

SAFETY

Act 121 (Domestic Abuse Protective Orders, Temporary Restraining Orders, and Orders for Protection Penalties) - increases offender penalties and provides additional time for survivors to implement critical safety measures, such as relocation, when they experience an escalation of abusive behavior.

HCR55 (Effectiveness of Domestic Violence Laws) - requests the Judiciary convene a working group to conduct an analysis as to the efficacy of our existing laws in preventing continued abuse and harassment, and to provide recommendations for improvements.

SB893 Deferred (Casino Gaming) - HSCSW opposed the measure as current research substantiates the HSCSW's 2021 findings that gambling harms include an increased risk of family members experiencing gender-based violence and child abuse.

HB1308 Deferred (Gambling and Sports Wagering) - HSCSW opposed the measure as it specified that sports wagering would not be considered a game of chance or gambling.

OPPORTUNITY

SR117 (Paid Family and Medical Leave) - requests the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations convene a working group to develop recommendations for establishing and implementing a paid family and medical leave program for the state.

Act 154 (Data Sharing and Governance Working Group) - increases cross-agency collaboration, governance, and data sharing, enabling state leadership to address Hawaii's affordability and out-migration crisis.

PROGRESS

SR149 (Gender-Neutral Terminology) - requests the Legislative Reference Bureau conduct a review of the HRS and recommend amendments to incorporate gender-neutral terminology.

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

RESULTS

PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

PROGRESS

HR8 (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) - urges the U.S. Department of Justice to include Hawaii in the Missing or Murdered Indigenous Persons regional outreach program.

Act 250 (State Budget) - provides funds for HSCSW's fiscal year 2026 personnel and operating expenses.

HEALTH

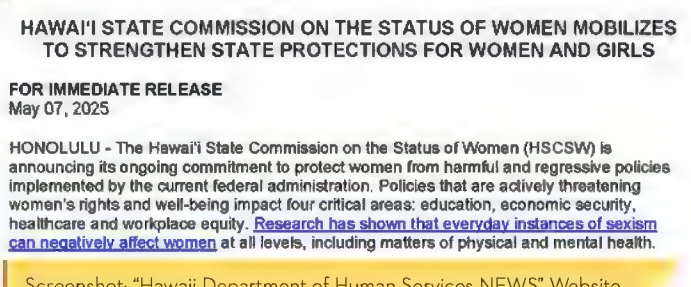
Act 254 (University of Hawaii (UH) Cancer Center) - funds the UH Cancer Center to conduct a multiethnic cohort study, identifying the social, cultural, environmental, and economic determinants of cancers that are leading causes of death for Hawaii's women, improving our community's ability to prevent, screen, detect, treat and increase survivorship.

Act 28 (Practice of Midwifery) - makes laws regulating midwives and the practice of midwifery permanent.

WOMEN'S SUPPORT AND OUTREACH

HSCSW developed educational materials, issued press releases, and regularly networked with public and private organizations involved in women's issues, to improve knowledge and awareness.

- Co-Chaired Hawaii Women's Coalition Meetings
- Issued a May 2025 Press Release - Earned Media
- Panelist for the UH Commission on the Status of Women's Tradwife Webinar: The Women behind the Trend and Modern Feminist Reactions



HAWAI'I STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN MOBILIZES TO STRENGTHEN STATE PROTECTIONS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 07, 2025

HONOLULU - The Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women (HSCSW) is announcing its ongoing commitment to protect women from harmful and regressive policies implemented by the current federal administration. Policies that are actively threatening women's rights and well-being impact four critical areas: education, economic security, healthcare and workplace equity. Research has shown that everyday instances of sexism can negatively affect women at all levels, including matters of physical and mental health.

Screenshot: "Hawaii Department of Human Services NEWS" Website

RESULTS

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

MEMBERSHIP

Ex Officio Non-Voting Members (6):

- Superintendent of Education Designee
- President of the University of Hawaii Designee
- Director of Labor and Industrial Relations Designee
- Director of Human Resources Development
- Director of Human Services Designee
- Director of Health Designee

Governor Appointed Voting Commissioners (7):

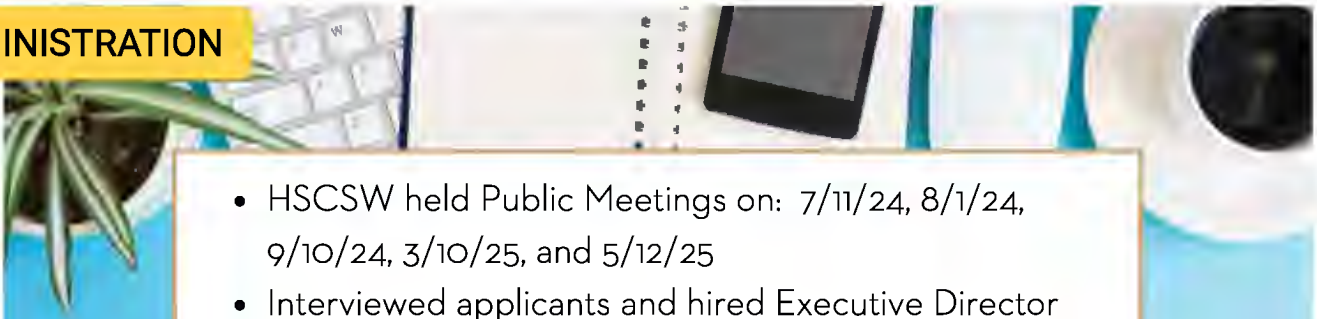
- Hawaii County, Chair
- Maui County
- Kauai County
- Oahu
- Oahu
- VACANCY, Oahu
- VACANCY, Oahu

Staff (2):

- Executive Director
  - Filled December 2024
- Administrative Assistant
  - Filled May 2025



ADMINISTRATION



- HSCSW held Public Meetings on: 7/11/24, 8/1/24, 9/10/24, 3/10/25, and 5/12/25
- Interviewed applicants and hired Executive Director
- Re-opened the HSCSW office
- Participated in recruitment and onboarding of Administrative Assistant
- Updated Commission documentation and website
- Established monthly Commissioner communications
- Resumed procurement, administrative and travel activities

HAWAII COUNTY COMMITTEE

ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

RESULTS

OPPORTUNITY

Hawaii County CSW participated in Get Out the Vote 2024 events and candidate discussions to promote greater voter engagement, education, and awareness in Hawaii County focused on women and girls. This included participation in Constitution Day 2024 held at UH Hilo, Ladies Night Out at the Hilo Civic Center where the CSW had a voter registration and education table, and a Civic Engagement event at Kea'au High School in partnership with the League of Women Voters of Hawaii County.





Provided food and supplies for 3 live events spread out around Hawaii Island where women leaders were able to participate in professional development activities to re-engage and reconnect with each other while giving back and building on the established professional networks around Hawaii Island. This included training to help women identify their working genius and the working genius of others on their team to be able to develop and operate as highly efficient and effective teams.

RESULTS

HAWAII COUNTY COMMITTEE
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HEALTH

Provided funding to purchase supplies in support of Hawaii Island YMCA's Period Poverty Project. Feminine hygiene products, storage bags and wet wipes were provided based on needs determined by the YMCA.



SAFETY



Participated in the Hawaii County Office of the Prosecuting Attorney's Domestic Violence Vigil.

PROGRESS

In collaboration with the Kauai County Committee on the Status of Women, approved a letter to send to Governor Josh Green urging him to fill the Executive Director vacancy on the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women. It was not necessary to send the letter since an appointment to the position was made shortly after the letter was approved.



HAWAII COUNTY COMMITTEE

ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

RESULTS

PROGRESS

Sent a letter to Mayor Kimo Alameda shortly after he was elected to invite him to a CSW meeting to hear about who the committee is, what the concerns of the committee are, what the committee is doing, and how the committee can work with the Hawaii County administration on current initiatives.



Screenshot: "Hawaii County CSW" Website

Two Hawaii County CSW members attended Opening Day at the State Capitol to represent Hawaii County women and girls and to meet with state legislators on topics important to women and girls in Hawaii County.



Photo: "Hawaii Life" Website

Submitted testimony in support of HB727 Relating to Women's Court.



RESULTS

HONOLULU COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

OPPORTUNITY

Honolulu County CSW published a commissioned survey of over 400 Hawaii residents regarding perspectives on **Paid Family Leave.**



HEALTH

October 2024 - Distribution of Period Products

At the County Rotunda, the Kauai Committee led by member Kawakami distributed 300 Menstrual All-In-One Kits, 600 individual tampons, and 636 individual pads to Catholic Charities, Kauai Economic Opportunity & Housing Programs, and the YWCA.



Screenshot: Kauai County Press Release

County Press Release

October 2024 – Breast Cancer Awareness Month

The Committee led by member Carvalho initiated a county press release, posted banners, initiated sign-waving in front of Kauai Community College, lit up the Historic County Building, and organized community outreach with an informational pop-up tent by the American Cancer Society.



County Press Release

June 2025 – Period Products

The Committee led by member Kawakami initiated the purchase of period products that will be distributed to local organizations.



Screenshot: Kauai County Press Release



RESULTS

KAUAI COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

SAFETY

July 2024 – Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign

The Committee led by member Kawakami launched a Human Trafficking Awareness Campaign, unveiling new signage that will be placed at county park restroom facilities.

County Press Release



Screenshot: Kauai County Press Release

April 2025 - Denim Day

The Committee led members Ignacio-Neumiller and Barrett partnered with the Zonta Club of Kauai and the YWCA at the County Rotunda to initiate a Denim Day Awareness proclamation presentation and gathering at the County Rotunda.

County Press Release

ZONTA CLUB OF KAUAI
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL
BUILD A BETTER WORLD FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

Screenshot: "Zonta Club of Kauai" Website



June 2025 – Human Trafficking

The Committee led by member Kawakami initiated the design and printing of Human Trafficking Signs that will replace all damaged posters that have already been posted in all County bathrooms/facilities.

PROGRESS

July 2024 – Annual NACW Conference

The Committee sent the acting Chair Emma White to attend the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) Conference in Boston from July 24-28.

November 2024 – Hawaii State Legislative Workshop

The Committee partnered with the Public Access Room to hold a virtual workshop where Kauai residents could learn effective ways to participate in Hawaii's legislative process. Chair Lori Barrett attended. The discussion included how the public could use their voice: finding and communicating with their legislator, sharing ideas, using their voice to try and keep a bill moving forward, how to search for bills, and check their status. Time was also provided for questions.



Screenshot: YouTube

County Press Releases:

- Announcing the Legislative Workshop
- Reminder

Workshop Video

March 2025 - Women's History Month

The Committee led by Ex-Officio and Hawaii State Commission member Edie Ignacio Neumiller, executed a successful screening of the documentary film "Rise of the Wahine" via press releases, radio spots and interviews (Pacific Media Group), and physical flyers.


Screenshot: "Rise of the Wahine: Champions of Title IX" Website

County Press Release:

- Reminder
- The Garden Island Newspaper Press Release
- Kauai Now News Press Release

RESULTS

KAUAI COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

PROGRESS

The Status of County Leadership

Of the 38 leadership positions in the County,
9 or 23.62% of the positions are held by women.

While this is less than a majority, it should be noted
that some of the most influential positions are held by women.

**This includes the positions of the managing director,
chief of staff, director and deputy of finance,
and the county clerk which are
the top leadership positions in the executive and
legislative branches of the County.**

Of the 96 current positions filled
on Boards and Commissions,
49 positions are held by women.
This is a majority of 51.9% representation.

It should be noted if members of the Committee
on the Status of Women are not counted,
the remaining membership would constitute
less than a majority of 39.36%.



MAUI COUNTY COMMITTEE
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

RESULTS

In 2025, the County of Maui Committee on the Status of Women advanced several key initiatives supporting the well-being of women and families across Maui Nui.

HEALTH

The Committee conducted multiple reproductive-health roundtables with pregnant and postpartum mothers, medical professionals, and community **advocates, gathering critical insights on trauma-informed care, maternal support needs, and the challenges created when mothers are separated from their newborns due to inter-island transfers.**



RESULTS

MAUI COUNTY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

PROGRESS

A major highlight of the year was
Nā Wāhine Hanohano 2025:
Ka Holomua Laulima! Nā Wāhine Hoʻoulu Hanauna
("Women of Excellence 2025: Advancing Together in Unity!
Women Who Inspire Generations"),
which honored ten extraordinary women of Maui County.

Honorees included: Honorary Historical Awardees
Councilmember Tasha Kama and
Maui Police Department Officer Suzanne O;
Unsung Heroes
Angie Haramoto,
Kadi "Katherine" Mourningstar Verhaeghe, and
Minoaka Kapuaahiwalani-Fitzsimmons;
Women of Excellence
Chelene Arnold,
Charleen Crozier,
Wailani Tanaka, and
Kiʻinaniokalani Kahoʻohanohano; and
Young Woman of Promise
Keolaonakaiʻelua Mather.

The celebration also featured a powerful panel with
Maui's first female appointed Assistant Chief of Police, Joy Medeiros;
FEMA's first-ever appointed Cultural Advisor, Makalapua Kanuha; and
Native Hawaiian midwife, teacher, and cultural practitioner
Kiʻinaniokalani Kahoʻohanohano
facilitated by
Maui Commissioner to the HSCSW Stacey Moniz.

About UH CSW

University of Hawaii President's Commission on the Status of Women (UH CSW) is committed to improving the support, well-being, development, and advancement of all women in the university community. UH CSW actively promotes a safe, inclusive working and learning environment free of sexism and discrimination through policy work, advocacy, and education.

UH CSW consists of commissioners, associate members, ex-officios, and liaisons from across the UH System. The UH CSW meets regularly to discuss emerging issues affecting women in the university community and to collaborate on initiatives designed to bolster gender equity.

2025 Virtual Conference

In April and May 2025, the UH CSW hosted its second annual virtual conference, Wāhine Mana: Resistance & Resilience. In ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, wāhine mana means both "powerful women" and "female empowerment." The 2025 Wāhine Mana series featured three engaging webinars, exploring what grounds us and what drives us during periods of change.

On April 30, 2025, #TradWife -The Women behind the Trend & Modern Feminist Reactions, UH Manoa Professor Rebecca Stotzer shared her groundbreaking research of the #TradWife social media movement. This event also featured a panel discussion on how the #TradWife trend raises issues of autonomy, privilege, and resistance. Next, on May 1, 2025, UH CSW Members, Jessica Shaffer and Jamie Newalu, presented Nondiscrimination at UH: Bedrock Protections for All, explaining how UH continues to protect against discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, and gender expression and how to foster safe and welcoming spaces for all. Finally, on May 7, 2025, in Kūkulu Kumuhana Wellbeing Framework: Grounding in Ancestral Abundance, Dawn Rego-Yee shared how traditional Native Hawaiian culture and values provide insights into how we can tend to the wellbeing of ourselves, our families, and our communities, even during times of upheaval.

Forging & Strengthening Partnerships

In August 2024, UH CSW held a full-day, in-person strategic planning retreat to clarify priorities and build momentum for the next few years. UH CSW identified increased community engagement as a top priority and has since grown in this area.

Several new members have joined the UH CSW, increasing representation across the 10 campuses of the UH system and increased involvement from UH students. This has allowed the UH CSW to foster robust and wide-ranging conversations about pressing issues, like building campuses free from discrimination, supporting caregivers, etc.

In Spring 2025, UH CSW partnered with the UH Commission on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer+ Equality (LGBTQ+ Commission) to issue a Joint Statement of Solidarity & Commitment to Nondiscrimination, following new executive orders and federal directives issued by the presidential administration that have negatively impacted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts nationwide.

In April 2025, some UH CSW members also attended the 2025 Sexual Assault Awareness Month Sign-Waving event at the Capitol, organized by the Sex Abuse Treatment Center.

Engagement with the Presidential Advisory Council on Federal Policy

Since March 2025, UH CSW maintained close engagement with UH leadership, including participation in the President's Advisory Council on Federal Policy. This council regularly meets to discuss federal developments, including executive orders, agency guidance, and court decisions–that affect higher education, civil rights compliance, DEI efforts, and university funding and research.



The UH CSW's involvement ensures that gender equity concerns remain visible at the highest levels of university decision-making, especially in light of recent federal actions affecting civil rights protections, grant funding tied to minority-serving institutions, and DEI programming. This engagement supports the UH CSW's mission to advocate for policies that safeguard equity, access, and opportunity for all members of the UH community.

Statewide Collaboration

Finally, UH CSW values its strong working relationship with the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women, especially with the Executive Director, whose leadership and partnership have enhanced our collective efforts to coordinate on issues affecting women and families across Hawaii. This relationship helps ensure that university and statewide efforts are aligned, particularly in policy advocacy, community outreach, and education.



RECOMMENDATIONS

HAWAII STATE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

HSCSW collaborated with the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to provision evidence-informed policy recommendations, brief research and data highlights for the consideration of the Governor and State Legislature.

These recommendations reflect potential policy solutions to advance equity, equality, health, and economic opportunity for girls and women in Hawaii.

Unless otherwise noted, the data indicators referenced are available on IWPR's State Policy Action Lab.

HEALTH

Guarantee all workers the right to access paid family and medical leave.

Lawmakers could support new parents and children by guaranteeing workers the right to access paid family and medical leave. There is currently no law in Hawaii that mandates that all workers in the state are able to take paid time off to care for a new child or seriously ill family member. Support from the **Keiki Caucus** and the **Working Families Caucus** could provide additional opportunity to progress paid family and medical leave legislation introduced in the 2025 session.

Guarantee all workers the right to earn paid sick days.

Lawmakers could advance policy that provides workers with the ability to take at least 40 hours of paid sick leave, so they are able to access care for themselves and their families. Hawaii currently has no laws requiring access to paid sick leave. Lawmakers could protect the health of their constituents by supporting policies that create a paid sick leave program with a sustainable, long-term funding source and covers full- and part-time employees, seasonal workers, workers of all ages, and self-employed individuals.

- *What the research says*: IWPR research shows that paid family and medical leave laws would largely benefit workers with unmet needs in fields such as leisure and hospitality, which would greatly benefit the workers that support Hawaii's tourism economy. Further research summarized in IWPR's Paid Leave brief shows, when workers cannot access leave, they postpone care and their health may suffer, while paid sick leave programs help improve public health and limit the spread of diseases.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: Seventy-four percent of mothers of young children participated in the labor force and 55% of female single-headed households with children in Hawaii lived at or under 200% of the federal poverty threshold in 2023, suggesting it would be a financial burden to take unpaid time off to provide care for a new child or sick family member.

OPPORTUNITY

Establish a refundable and income-adjusted Child Tax Credit in accordance with the state's cost of living.

Lawmakers could improve affordability for parents and families by establishing child tax credits (CTC) that are refundable and income-adjusted for families with children under 18 years old. Although there is not currently a child tax credit in Hawaii, companion bills (HB694 and SB1053) introduced in the 2025 state legislative session aimed at creating a refundable, income adjusted child tax credit. Legislators in Hawaii could help struggling families in the state meet their basic needs by supporting this legislation.

- *What the research says*: IWPR research found that women were more likely to report both needing and receiving the expanded CTC and that many Americans use the money from the credit to meet basic needs such as paying for food and childcare.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: In 2023, the **average cost of center-based infant care in Hawaii was the highest in the nation** at $22,585, 41% of the median annual income for women working full-time year-round (FTYR).

Support and pass a student loan borrower bill of rights to address the student debt crisis that disproportionately impacts women, and particularly women of color.

Policymakers should protect the financial stability of women pursuing higher education by creating policies that provide strong protections for student loan borrowers. This includes creating policies that protect student borrowers from deceptive practices, improve disclosures and outreach to borrowers when their loan is sold or transferred, and help borrowers understand their loan forgiveness options. The Hawaii legislature should introduce and pass a student loan borrower bill of rights, and the Governor should support and sign this legislation to bolster the economic stability of women in Hawaii.

OPPORTUNITY

- *What the research says*: As summarized by IWPR, the cost of college education has increased substantially over the past three decades, though college education continues to play a crucial role in driving economic mobility. According to the American Association of University Women, women hold nearly two-thirds of all student loan debt. Yet women of color experience the burden of student debt more acutely due to historic intergenerational wealth gaps.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: Nearly 1 in 3 women and men (30% of each gender) in the state have attained an associate's degree or some college credits. Yet, women earn less than men across all levels of education, making them uniquely burdened by student loan debt. For women of color in the state, this earnings disparity is even greater: Between 2019–2023, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander women holding an associate's degree or some college credits earned $47,000 annually at the median for FTYR work, $26,000 less than White men, who earned $73,000.

Eliminate the subminimum wage for tipped workers to ensure everyone earns a livable wage.

Lawmakers could advance policy on equitable wages by eliminating the subminimum wage for tipped workers (currently $12.75 per hour). This would ensure that all workers, including the tipped hospitality workers that support Hawaii's tourism industry, earn a livable wage and can meet the basic needs of themselves and their families.

- *What the research says*: IWPR research shows women, and particularly women of color, are disproportionately disadvantaged by the subminimum wage, as they are more likely to work tipped jobs. While women are twice as likely as men to work as servers, they earn 79% of what male servers do, making them more vulnerable to wage theft and poverty.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: IWPR research shows that nearly 6 in 10 (59%) servers in Hawaii are women, and 44% are women of color (compared to 15% White women). In addition, among women living at or under the federal poverty threshold between 2019–2023, 39% were women of color, while 10% were White women.



RECOMMENDATIONS

OPPORTUNITY

Require employers to make reasonable workplace accommodations for workers experiencing menopause and related conditions.

Hawaii could become one of the first states in the country to require employers provide accommodations for menopause and related conditions for workers such as flexible work hours and adjusted work schedules, remote work options, access to private spaces within the workplace, breathable uniforms, temperature-controlled work environments for cooling, and extension of sick leave policies to menopause symptoms and related conditions. State lawmakers could protect workers experiencing perimenopause and menopause and potentially attract new workers to the state by promoting, passing, and enacting legislation that provides menopause-related workplace accommodations in the state.

- *What the research says*: The Mayo Clinic estimates that menopause related symptoms cost an estimated $1.8 billion in lost work time per year in the United States. Whether due to the severity of the symptoms or the lack of accommodations to manage these symptoms at work, women are having to miss work due to symptoms of menopause.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: According to Census Reporter, in 2023 25% of the population of Hawaii was between the ages of 40–60, when most women experience perimenopause and menopause. As noted in IWPR's Reproductive Health Care Across the Lifespan brief, a range of research and studies show such onset and symptoms may vary by race and ethnicity.

PROGRESS

Improve the accessibility and affordability of abortion by requiring private insurance coverage for abortion care.

Lawmakers could further advance reproductive justice and health equity in the state by advancing new law requiring private insurance companies in the state to reimburse beneficiaries for abortion care. Hawaii currently mandates that Medicaid state funds cover abortion services and the state can further protect women and increase the affordability of health care by extending this mandate to private insurance coverage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRESS

Strengthen data privacy protections for reproductive health care patients and providers.

Lawmakers in Hawaii could strengthen reproductive justice policy by introducing and passing a bill that creates data privacy protections for patients. New policy could specifically prohibit the collection, use, disclosure, sale, sharing, or retention of personal information from individuals within the geolocation of reproductive health clinics such as through geofencing.

- *What the research says*: Research summarized by IWPR's Promoting Access to Abortion brief shows that states that uphold protective abortion policies typically have stronger economies. Further, Center for American Progress reports on the weaponization of tech and data, noting the history of opponents of abortion rights using geolocation data to target people based on their proximity to reproductive health facilities.

- *What the data shows in Hawaii*: An abortion can cost as much as $1300 without insurance in Hawaii. While nearly 97% of women have health insurance in the state, less than 1 in 5 women are insured through Medicaid and therefore guaranteed abortion care coverage. This leaves a large proportion of insured women with a heavy financial burden that policymakers can help address.



Thank you.