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Media Contact:

Kim Moa, kmoa@acluhawaii.org, (808) 203-9945
media@hawaiilgbtlegacy.com

**Marriage Equality Advocates Form New Coalition to Change Article 1, Section 23 of
Hawai‘i State Constitution**

HONOLULU, HI – A new coalition of community partners has formed to repeal Section 23 of the Hawai‘i State Constitution, which places the power to limit marriage to opposite-sex couples in the hands of the state legislature. The “[Change 23 Coalition](#)” steering committee includes the [Hawai‘i LGBT Legacy Foundation](#), [Hawai‘i Health and Harm Reduction Center](#) (HHHRC), [Papa Ola Lōkahi](#), [Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement](#) (CNHA), and the [ACLU of Hawai‘i](#). Coalition members say repealing Section 23 is an important step in securing marriage equality for the LGBTQIA+ community in Hawai‘i.

“Hawai‘i has a long-standing tradition of championing the freedoms and rights of its people,” said **Hawai‘i LGBT Legacy Foundation Executive Director Randy Soriano**, acknowledging the important role the State of Hawai‘i has played in the pursuit of marriage equality across the U.S. “The Equal Rights Amendment, which prohibits discrimination based on sex, has been enshrined in the State Constitution for over 40 years, even as its passage remains pending at the national level.”

The coalition announcement comes on the heels of National Coming Out Day during LGBT History Month and also marks the 30th anniversary of the Hawai‘i State Supreme Court *Baehr v Miike* decision, which made Hawai‘i the first place in the world to establish the right of same-sex couples to marry. Article 1 of the Hawai‘i Constitution’s Bill of Rights expands the freedom to marry beyond the U.S. Constitution, but coalition members assert there’s still more work to be done to protect equal rights for LGBTQIA+ folks in Hawai‘i.

“On November 3, 1998, a setback occurred when Section 23 was added to the Hawai‘i State Constitution. It is the only section in our Bill of Rights that was inserted to deny a right,” said **Change 23 Coalition Chair Jeffrey Hong**, who also serves as an ACLU of Hawai‘i board member. “Along with our coalition allies and supporters, we call for the repeal of Section 23, which represents an infringement on the rights and freedom of individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

Approximately three-quarters of Hawai‘i residents support the repeal of Section 23 and agree that marriage is a fundamental right between individuals regardless of sex, according to a public opinion poll conducted in September by the research division of the Anthology Marketing Group for the ACLU of Hawai‘i.

“Removing Section 23 will solidify the progress Hawai‘i has made on civil rights for sexual and gender minorities in recent decades and affirm our state’s ongoing commitment to civic equality,” said **HHHRC Development & Marketing Director Andrew Ogata**, a Legacy Foundation board member since 2018. Ogata was in his early teens when Section 23 was placed into the state constitution.

“Coming together in allyship for marriage equality is an important step towards creating a more inclusive society where discrimination has no place and all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Together, we can create lasting change and ensure that our constitution truly reflects the values of fairness and equal opportunity for all,” said Hong who also thanked community partners who have already joined the coalition.

"It's important to ensure that all within our lāhui are able to be with their partners without stigma or interference from policies that uphold a construct that wasn't of, by, or for our people. Removing Section 23 will allow the autonomy of our māhū to proclaim their aloha without prejudice," said **CEO of Papa Ola Lōkahi Dr. Sheri Daniels**.

The coalition led by Chair Hong, also includes honorary co-chairs, Nita Lopez, Doug Chin, Judge Daniel R. Foley, and Supreme Court Justice Steven H. Levinson. Judge Foley and Justice Levinson, were honored during the Legacy Foundation’s *Vision Without Limits Gala* event earlier this year for the [important roles they played in the fight for marriage equality in Hawai‘i](#) three decades ago.

“Every individual deserves the right to marry the person they love and build a life together. As we witness the rights of our LGBTQIA+ community members being stripped away across the continental U.S., we recognize that now is time for change here at home,” said Soriano.

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*The **Hawai‘i LGBT Legacy Foundation**’s mission is to support, empower, educate, unify, and facilitate LGBT organizations and individuals in Hawai‘i. **Hawai‘i Health & Harm Reduction Center** serves Hawai‘i communities by reducing harm, promoting health, creating wellness, and fighting stigma of HIV, hepatitis, homelessness, substance use, mental illness, and poverty in our community. The **ACLU of Hawai‘i**’s mission is to protect the civil rights and liberties enshrined in the state and federal constitutions through litigation, legislative, and public education programs statewide. **Papa Ola Lōkahi**’s mission is to improve the health status and wellbeing of Native Hawaiians and others by advocating for, initiating and maintaining culturally appropriate strategic actions aimed at improving the physical, mental and spiritual health of Native Hawaiians and their ‘ohana (families) and empowering them to determine their own destinies. The **Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement**’s mission is to enhance the cultural, economic, political, and community development of Native Hawaiians.*