HOUSE RESOLUTION

URGING THE STATE OF HAWAI'I DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO CONVENE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE HAWAI'I LEGAL AID INTERAGENCY ROUNDTABLE TO BETTER SERVE LOW-INCOME, VULNERABLE, AND AT-RISK POPULATIONS AND INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE.

WHEREAS, the Department of Human Services is responsible for providing essential human services and protecting the health and well-being of all of Hawai'i's residents, especially those who are least able to help themselves; and

WHEREAS, the Department of the Attorney General is responsible for providing public services and legal support to the State, its departments, and agencies; and

WHEREAS, many Hawai'i residents face gaps in the availability of legal aid - including legal representation, advice, community education, and self-help and technology tools - especially those who are most vulnerable and underserved; and

WHEREAS, the 2007 Assessment of Civil Legal Needs and Barriers of Low- and Moderate-Income People in Hawai'i found that only one in five people have their civil legal needs addressed and that only one in three people who contacted a civil legal service provider were able to get assistance; and

WHEREAS, there is only one legal services attorney for every 2,291 persons living below 125 percent of the federal poverty level and only one attorney for every 4,402 persons living below 200 percent of the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, significant barriers to obtaining legal assistance exist in Hawai'i including, in addition to the inability to afford an attorney, language and cultural barriers, lack of
knowledge of one's rights or the availability of services, and
difficulty in accessing legal services programs; and

WHEREAS, equal access to justice helps individuals and
families receive health services, housing, education, and
employment; enhances family stability and public safety; and
secures the public's faith in the justice system; and

WHEREAS, guaranteeing access to legal solutions improves
outcomes for those seeking assistance and results in cost
savings to the State in the long term by preventing or reducing
problems like homelessness, poverty, and health issues that can
be costly and harmful to individuals and the public; and

WHEREAS, the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States
Constitution ensures equal justice under the law and no state
shall "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal
protection of the laws"; and

WHEREAS, goal sixteen of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development is to promote just, peaceful, and
inclusive societies that provide access to justice for all and
build effective and accountable institutions at all levels; and

WHEREAS, a roundtable allows different stakeholders to come
to the table to exchange ideas and information, plan, and
coordinate, which allows programs to be more efficient and
produce better outcomes; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the
Twenty-ninth Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session
of 2018, that the State of Hawaii Department of Human Services
and the Department of the Attorney General are urged to convene
the Hawaii Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable (Roundtable); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Human
Services and the Department of the Attorney General are urged to
participate, and the Attorney General and the Director of Human
Services, or their designees, are urged to serve as co-chairs of
the Roundtable; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Roundtable is requested to submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on its success in achieving its mission no later than 20 days prior to the convening of each regular session; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Roundtable is requested to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature on the economic impact of funding access to civil legal services no later than January 1, 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that representatives from the following government agencies are urged to participate in the Roundtable:

(1) The Department of Health;
(2) The Executive Office on Aging;
(3) The Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs;
(4) The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations;
(5) The Office of Community Services;
(6) The Hawaii Public Housing Authority;
(7) The Hawaii Civil Rights Commission;
(8) The Office of Hawaiian Affairs;
(9) The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands;
(10) The Department of Public Safety; and
(11) Any other government agency the co-chairs may, from time to time, designate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the co-chairs may invite the participation of the Judiciary, Access to Justice Commission, and Hawaii Consortium of Legal Service Providers to the extent consistent with law and legal obligations; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Attorney General, Director of Human Services, Director of Health, Director of the Executive Office on Aging, Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Director of Labor and Industrial Relations, Executive Director of the Office of Community Services, Executive Director of the Hawaii Public Housing Authority, Executive Director of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Chairperson of the Hawaiian Homes Commission, and the Director of Public Safety.

OFFERED BY: 

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