



STATE OF HAWAI'I
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAI'I

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

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'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA

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HAWAI'I SELECTED TO JOIN NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO EXPAND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HONOLULU — The Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities (HSCDD) proudly announces that Hawai'i has been selected by the U.S. Department of Labor as one of 13 states, along with the District of Columbia, to participate in the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) initiative. This prestigious selection underscores Hawai'i's commitment to increasing competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities statewide.

Hawai'i's participation in the NEON initiative was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Hawai'i Employment First Task Force (HEFT), a coalition led by the HSCDD. HEFT includes representatives from the Developmental Disabilities Division, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Education, Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Division, Department of Labor, Statewide Independent Living Council, and Work Now Hawai'i. Together, these agencies and organizations are advancing policies and programs to ensure individuals with disabilities have equal access to meaningful, competitive, and integrated employment opportunities.

The NEON initiative provides "core states" with critical capacity-building support, policy development assistance, and ongoing mentoring to promote employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. With this partnership, Hawai'i aims to strengthen its commitment to Employment First principles and implement sustainable strategies that enable individuals with disabilities to thrive in the workforce.

"This selection is a testament to Hawai'i's dedication to creating inclusive and competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities," said HSCDD Executive Administrator, Daintry Bartoldus. "Through the collaborative efforts of HEFT, Hawai'i is poised to make significant strides in advancing disability employment policies and ensuring every individual has the chance to succeed in the workplace."

The NEON initiative, administered by the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), focuses on expanding competitive, integrated employment opportunities. This approach ensures that individuals with disabilities work alongside people without disabilities in jobs that pay competitive wages and offer opportunities for growth.

By joining the NEON initiative, Hawai'i gains access to federal resources and technical expertise that will enhance its efforts to empower individuals with disabilities. The Hawai'i Employment First Task Force will lead the state's engagement with the NEON initiative, working closely with community partners to implement innovative policies and practices.

For more information about Hawai'i's involvement in the NEON initiative or the Hawai'i Employment First Task Force, please contact Julia Althoff at 808-798-1501 or Julia.althoff@doh.hawaii.gov.

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