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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Hawai'i is One of 12 States Chosen to Expand Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

HONOLULU - The pathway to workplace equity is lit with NEON initiatives.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced Hawai'i as one of 12 states that will participate in its National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) initiative. The initiative is to commence during the 2024 federal fiscal year and enables Hawai'i government agencies to receive consultation, capacity-building support and ongoing mentoring to increase competitive employment for people with disabilities.

"We are one of 12 states offered the opportunity to make workplace equity a reality rather than it remaining a great idea," said Daintry Bartoldus, the Executive Administrator of the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities. "The council has already congregated a plethora of interagency groups both public and private striving to accomplish this goal. The NEON grant will surely accelerate our efforts".

The newly received NEON grant will act as a catalyst for Hawai'i's current employment equity efforts including the state's Employment First Task Force. Led by the state's Council on Developmental Disabilities and Work Now Hawaii, the Task Force houses various agencies committed to increasing employment opportunities for all individuals with disabilities on the islands. A few of the involved agencies include the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Center on Disability Studies, Department of Education, Division of Developmental Disabilities, and the Hawaii Association of People Supporting Employment First.

Hawaii is considered a core state along with 11 others committed to advance well-needed policy change resulting in increasing work opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Alongside Hawaii are NEON grantees California, Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee and the District of Columbia. For more information on the NEON initiative, please refer to the following website:

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/neon>

About the Hawai'i State Council on Developmental Disabilities:

The function of the DD Council is to provide advocacy, quality assurance, capacity building, and systems change activities on behalf of persons with developmental disabilities.

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