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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NON-PROFITS COME TOGETHER IN TOUGH TIMES: **HAWAII IMMIGRANT JUSTICE CENTER (FORMERLY NA LOIO)** **JOINS THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF HAWAII**

The Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center (HIJC), Hawaii's only legal service in the state that services low-income immigrants, has joined the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, the state's oldest non-profit public interest law firm. HIJC will be officially known as the Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, retaining four of its core staff members.

Founded in 1983 as "Na Loio" (meaning 'the lawyers' in Hawaiian), HIJC focuses on several important areas of legal service including International Human Trafficking, Family Reunification, Citizenship, Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault, Asylum, and Child Protection.

With the help from the Hawaii Community Foundation, to assist with the facilitation of this historic partnership, the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii and the Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center unite to broaden the scope of legal services in Hawaii for both citizens and immigrants alike. The newly emerged Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii will continue providing critical immigration legal services and with the services of Legal Aid expand the ability to provide holistic civil legal services to immigrants.

Susan Chong Wong, President of HIJC's Board of Directors, says, "This partnership will enable our organization to continue to provide pro bono immigration legal services and advocacy in a time of statewide financial hardship. Our mission remains to insure that vulnerable immigrants who are isolated by language, culture, or victimization will have equal access to justice. By uniting Legal Aid's statewide resources and long-standing commitment to improving the lives of those in poverty and need with our unique legal expertise and community ties, we hope to better serve both our immigrant population and all of Hawaii's disadvantaged people." Both Ms. Wong and Lowell Chun Hoon, long time HIJC Directors, have joined Legal Aid's Board of Directors.

George Zweibel, President of Legal Aid's Board of Directors states, "Legal Aid has always been committed to making equal access to justice for all a reality in Hawai'i. Immigrants in our communities face special language, cultural and other challenges. The services HIJC has provided are simply too important to disappear. That is why we have agreed to create a new HIJC division and to bring over a number of former HIJC staff and board members, ensuring that HIJC's expertise and experience will not be lost."

Executive Director Nalani Fujimori Kaina, says, "Hawaii has the sixth largest immigrant population in the United States and many of our residents can easily trace their ancestry to other countries. We are proud of our diversity and heritage, and immigration legal services are critical to this

legacy. For immigrants who are victims of domestic violence, who seek family reunification or are victims of international human trafficking, the continuation of these legal services is necessary for survival.”

The Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii will retain its physical office space located in downtown Honolulu and its hotline numbers for inquiries. HIJC at the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii does not accept walk-ins. For services, call the Immigration Hotline: (808) 536-8826 or our toll free number for neighbor islands at 1-800-499-4302 x279 to schedule an appointment.

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Founded in 1950, Legal Aid is Hawaii’s oldest and largest non-profit law firm, dedicated to assisting the low- to moderate-income community. Our mission is to achieve fairness and justice for Hawaii’s people through quality representation, advocacy, community partnerships, education and outreach. For more information, visit: www.legalaidhawaii.org

For more information about the Hawaii Immigrant Justice Center at the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii, visit: www.hijcenter.org