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SCR-131 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. (2023-2024)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 131

CHAPTER 117

Relative to Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 20, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 131, Min. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

This measure would declare that the Legislature commends Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders for their notable accomplishments and contributions to California, recognizes April 2024 as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, recognizes the role that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have played in the social, economic, and political development of California throughout the state's history, and encourages all federal, state, and local organizations to promote the preservation of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander history and culture, including the preservation of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Making up more than 337,617 community members, the Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) community in California has the largest and most diverse population of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the contiguous United States. In comparison, the NHPI population of California was approximately 221,458 persons in 2000, and 289,873 persons in 2010. The NHPI population of today represents an increase of 44,840 persons, or 15.4 percent, from 2010 to 2020, and an increase of 113,255 persons, or 51.1 percent, from 2000 to 2020; and

WHEREAS, The NHPI community is a vibrant and diverse group of ethnicities that include, but are not limited to, Guamanian or Chamorro, Native Hawaiian, Marshallese, Fijian, Samoan, Tongan, and Papua New Guinean. According to the 2020 United States Census, the fastest growing NHPI group alone or in any combination was the Papua New Guinean population, which increased by 249.3 percent to 1,453 people. The Papua New Guinean, Chuukese, Ni-Vanuatu, Carolinian, Pohnpeian, Kosraean, Marshallese, I-Kiribati, and Yapese populations more than doubled, increasing more than 100 percent in 2020. The Native Hawaiian population grew by 29.1 percent from 527,077 in 2010 to 680,442 in 2020. It remained the largest NHPI group in 2020, comprising nearly 43 percent of the NHPI population in the United States. The Samoan population continued to be the second-largest detailed NHPI group alone or in any combination at 256,997, and the second-largest detailed NHPI group alone, at 133,148, representing 16.2 percent of the NHPI population alone or in combination and 19.3 percent of the NHPI population alone. The Samoan population alone grew by 21.4 percent and the Samoan population alone or in any combination grew by 39.3 percent. Chamorro was the third-largest detailed NHPI group, with 10.2 percent of the NHPI population alone identifying as Chamorro alone, at 70,704, and 9.1 percent of the NHPI population alone or in combination identifying as Chamorro at 143,947. The next largest detailed NHPI groups alone or in any combination were Tongan, Fijian, and Marshallese, which all had populations over 50,000; and

WHEREAS, In California, the Chuukese population is the fastest growing NHPI-alone group, increasing 296.2 percent to 10,500 people from 2010 to 2020. California has the largest proportions of the Samoan, Chamorro, Tongan, and Fijian populations alone or in any combination in the country. The Chamorro population in the County of San Diego was the nation's largest, at 9,391, and accounted for the second-largest NHPI group alone or in any combination in that county. While these figures refer to monoracial-identifying Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, there are tens of thousands more NHPI individuals across the state who are biracial or multiracial; and

WHEREAS, The Treaty of Paris formalized Guam as a United States territory in 1898 and was placed under the jurisdiction of the United States Navy, the United States assumed formal control of Hawai'i following the passage of the Hawaiian Annexation in 1898, and American Samoa became a United States territory by deed of cession in 1900. Because of this, the Chamorros of Guam, the Kānaka Maoli of Hawai'i, and the Samoans of American Samoa became subjects of the United States. As a result of the militarization on the Pacific Islands, according to AAPI Nexus, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders serve in the military at a higher rate than any other racial group in the United States. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are the most overrepresented racial group among active duty members, making up a proportion of the military that is almost six times greater than their representation in the United States. Today, many Pacific Islanders are American citizens; and

WHEREAS, An influx of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders arrived in California in the 1950s after World War II. Continued military service following World War II brought Pacific Islanders from the United States territories of American Samoa and Guam to California. Native Hawaiians and Tongans also came to California seeking economic opportunities, with many Tongans migrating to California via American Samoa. Many Pacific Islanders initially settled in southern California cities such as the Cities of Carson, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oceanside, and San Diego, while others settled in the City and County of San Francisco. Most NHPI Californians today reside in the greater Sacramento, San Francisco, and Los Angeles areas; and

WHEREAS, Data from the Minority Business Development Agency shows that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders continue to comprise a significant and growing part of our state's and nation's economy. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are overrepresented in blue-collar occupations, such as food preparation workers, grounds maintenance workers, hand laborers, health care aides, military service people, security officers, store clerks, and transportation or delivery workers. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders own over 8,800 employer firms across the state, creating more than 60,100 jobs for Californians. These NHPI-owned firms generated \$8.8 billion in revenue in the year 2020 alone. The firms span all sectors, with the most prominent being construction, scientific and technical services, and accommodation and food services; and

WHEREAS, In August 2023, the state of Hawai'i suffered from a series of devastating wildfires, especially on the island of Maui and in the town of Lāhainā. The fires, which killed over 101 people and injured over 67, destroyed many residential areas and cultural landmarks such as the Lāhainā Historic District. In particular, the fires risked erasing centuries of cultural heritage for Native Hawaiians, or Kānaka Maoli, who already face heightened threats of cultural destruction from the tourism industry and climate change. Native Hawaiians in the state and across the United States who have been personally or familially affected deserve robust humanitarian and social support from state and federal governments; and

WHEREAS, In May 2023, the territory of Guam endured the Category 4 Typhoon Mawar. With winds of up to 140 miles per hour, the typhoon damaged infrastructure and cut off access to electricity and running water for most of the island's 170,500 residents. While the economic sector of Guam sustained about \$112,000,000 in damage, fortunately, no one was killed in the storm. The indigenous Chamorro population in the territory, which historically and currently faces human rights violations including land seizures and the testing of nuclear and chemical weapons, is especially in need of economic investment and humanitarian aid in the recovery process; and

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders suffer disproportionately from chronic conditions such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and diabetes. Health risk behaviors are also higher among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders: 32.6 percent of Samoans, 25 percent of Tongans, and 21.3 percent of Native Hawaiians were current smokers compared to only 14 percent in California overall. Evidence among Pacific Islander young adults shows excessive burden of hazardous drinking and alcohol-related harms; and

WHEREAS, The toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on NHPI communities has been lasting, disproportionate, and underreported. Preexisting health disparities and inequities in the social determinants of health are driving the COVID-19 risk among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders make up a large number of the essential workforce, such as in the tourism and food industries. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are more likely to live in large, multigenerational households and denser communities, which further increases their exposure risk. The high rates of asthma, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, smoking, and vaping among NHPI communities increase the risk for severe COVID-19 symptoms. In the year 2020 alone, 177 Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders died from COVID-19 in California. From 2020 to early 2023, there were over 600 reported NHPI deaths from COVID-19 in California. According to the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, COVID-19 death rates in 2020 were 1.5 times higher for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders than they were for Californians overall. The death rates were even higher for Samoan, Tongan, and Chamorro or Guamanian Americans; Samoan Americans in

particular were two times more at risk of dying from COVID-19 than Californians overall. Because NHPI health data is often grouped with Asian American data, recorded as NHPI alone, and underreported, the resulting data underestimates the true toll that the pandemic had on NHPI communities; and

WHEREAS, Nationwide, 43 percent of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders speak a language other than English at home. Among the different NHPI communities, "Other Micronesian" includes the Marshallese, who have limited English proficiency (LEP), at 40 percent, or who speak English "less than very well." The LEP of Marshallese is followed by Tongan at 22 percent; "Melanesian," which includes Fijian, at 21 percent; Samoan at 16 percent; Chamorro at 8 percent; and Native Hawaiian at 3 percent. With there being minimal and limited culturally competent and in-language resources for the NHPI community to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the NHPI community began grassroots organizing to support one another, including, but not limited to, by establishing and strengthening the UCLA NHPI Data Policy Lab, the Bay Area Regional Task Force, the Southern California Pacific Islander Community Response Team, the Central Valley Pacific Islander Alliance, the Pacific Islander Community Partnership, and the Sacramento Marshallese Community. Beyond a need for data desegregation and language access, there must be continued policy support for ready and affordable access to vaccination, testing, and personal protective equipment, such as masks, for NHPI communities; and

WHEREAS, Rising sea levels due to global warming pose an existential threat to Pacific Islands such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands. By swallowing homes, infrastructure, and farmland, and forcing residents to migrate, rising sea levels also threaten Pacific Islander languages, which may go extinct as native populations dwindle and fewer individuals speak them as their first languages. Beyond stringently combating climate change, it is even more important now for California to provide for language education and access so that those with LEP in NHPI communities have equal access to resources and that the linguistic and cultural heritage carried with these languages is not lost; and

WHEREAS, NHPI communities face unique challenges as a result of their distinct histories and community experiences. As a result, the NHPI community organized in 1997 to update the federal Office of Management and Budget Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, which established a dedicated "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" category in data collection. The NHPI community would be best served if local, state, and federal entities disaggregated data to identify trends specific to the NHPI community. Further desegregation across ethnic categories and for people identifying as multiracial NHPI should be encouraged; and

WHEREAS, While Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders represent diverse ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds, they all also share similar cultural values and norms. These values include a respect and deference for elders, an appreciation for reciprocal labor and time, and an understanding of communal and intergenerational authority; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature must provide for the equity and socioeconomic well-being of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders through culturally sensitive and economically operative policies; and

WHEREAS, Preserving NHPI communities throughout California is critical to the state's history and the preservation of NHPI culture, history, traditions, and other elements of this heritage; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature commends Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders for their notable accomplishments and contributions to California, and recognizes April 2024 as Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature recognizes the role that Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have played in the social, economic, and political development of California throughout the state's history; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature encourages all federal, state, and local organizations to promote the preservation of NHPI history and culture, including the preservation of NHPI communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.