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April 10, 2017

Representative Linda Ichiyama  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
415 South Bereania Street  
Room 327  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Representative Ichiyama,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports House Resolution 83 and House Concurrent Resolution 133, which urge law enforcement agencies to comply with existing guidelines for the submission and testing of rape kits and request annual audits of rape kits statewide.

In 2016, Hawai'i enacted Act 207, which required the Attorney General to conduct a statewide audit of untested rape kits and convene a workgroup to make recommendations regarding the handling of sexual assault kits across the state.

The audit identified a total of 2,240 rape kits in the custody of county police departments. Based on these findings, the Act 207 Working Group developed the Malāma Kākou Project, a statewide, multidisciplinary plan to reform existing policy and practice for the handling of rape kits in Hawai'i.

H.R. 83 and H.C.R. 133 build upon these reforms by encouraging the swift submission and testing of newly collected rape kits. When tested, rape kit evidence can identify an unknown assailant, reveal serial offenders, affirm a victim's story, discredit a suspect's version of the events, and exonerate the innocent. Further, expeditious testing of all untested sexual assault kits prevents future backlogs, sending a powerful message to survivors that they—and their cases—matter. For these reasons, Joyful Heart supports the mandatory expeditious testing of every rape kit booked into evidence and connected to a reported sexual assault.

The annual audit reports requested by H.R. 83 and H.C.R. 133 will encourage accountability and ensure that all stakeholders, including survivors and the general public, can monitor the success of the implementation of the Malāma Kākou Project in Hawai'i. Regular data collection and reporting allows stakeholders to track progress and assess the impact of public policy changes.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your efforts to bring justice and healing to all sexual assault survivors in Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

Ilse Knecht  
Director, Policy & Advocacy