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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Statement of OHA Administrator and CEO Summer Sylva**

The people of Hawai'i and in particular Native Hawaiians deserve a future that honors 'āina, respects the law, and upholds genuine consultation with its communities. It is in that spirit that I express my deep disappointment in the Governor's recent letter to Secretary Driscoll—issued without prior consultation with the very advisory committee convened to guide this process. While this setback is real, we carry the resilience of our kūpuna with us and will continue to protect our 'āina and shape a future worthy of our lāhui.

The Governor's Advisory Committee on Military Leased Lands is composed almost entirely of Kānaka leaders. Each of us stepped into highly scrutinized roles at the Governor's request. All of us with the understanding that our lived experience, 'ike, and kuleana to the lāhui would be meaningfully included.

To again move forward unilaterally—despite public assurances of consultation—undermines the trust, candor, and integrity essential to any authentic advisory relationship.

While we accept that an advisory body lacks final decision-making power, being shut out of the conversation altogether is deeply concerning—especially when the proposals, concerns, and 'ike offered by Kānaka leaders are conveyed to federal officials in ways that appear to foreclose their viability.

Even more troubling is the reaffirmation of a unilaterally negotiated “community benefits package” while ongoing, grassroots, good-faith work continues to develop. That work includes creative, bipartisan legislative solutions designed to prevent repeating past injustices—solutions that ensure our lawmakers remain at the table and empower our communities to stand firm against renewed efforts to seize our Kingdom and Crown lands from us once more. These community-driven proposals center what matters most: meaningful consultation, adherence to the law, and aloha 'āina as a guiding value—not an afterthought. They are meant to shield our people from being sidelined again, not to float questions that subtly steer the federal government toward condemnation. We recognize what is being signaled, and its ramifications are dangerous, injurious, and deeply disempowering. Auwe. Auwe.

This latest act strains not only the advisory process, but the generations-long work of rebuilding trust between the Native Hawaiian community and the State. The leaders serving on this committee carry the weight of our communities' hopes, scrutiny, and expectations. We stepped

forward in response to this Administration's repeated commitments to transparency and partnership. Meaningful reconciliation, long overdue, guided us.

Receiving after-the-fact news of the Governor's December 2 letter has shaken my confidence.

As a member of this committee, I am reflecting seriously on whether OHA's continued participation serves the lāhui. The pattern of unilateral decision-making betrays the spirit of consultation pledged publicly.

And yet, because this moment is too consequential to walk away from, we appeal to you, Governor—to the integrity, wisdom, and aloha that we know you carry—and ask that you bring those forward now for the good of our people and 'āina. There remains a narrow and urgent opportunity to repair trust—to meet with the committee directly, to engage substantively rather than through proxies, and to conduct this advisory process with the integrity that Hawai'i's people deserve. Let us begin there, together.