



For Immediate Release

November 12, 2019

Contact

Will Caron, Communications Director

(808) 387-4920

will@hiappleseed.org

HAWAI'I APPLESEED AND PHOCUSED JOIN FORCES

The merger of these social justice organizations is meant to forge a stronger connection between data-driven policy and impacted communities.

HONOLULU, Hawai'i – Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice and [PHOCUSED](#) (Protecting Hawai'i's 'Ohana, Children, Under-Served, Elderly, and Disabled) have joined forces to lift up Hawai'i's people and strengthen our communities. PHOCUSED will become a critical component of Hawai'i Appleseed, bringing its coalition of social service providers and the people they serve to inform Hawai'i Appleseed's public policy advocacy work. The organizations will jointly pursue necessary changes to create a Hawai'i where everyone can thrive.

“When half the families in our state are struggling to get by, it's clear that Hawai'i's problems are systemic,” said Gavin Thornton, Hawai'i Appleseed's Executive Director. “These systems are difficult to change, and to do so requires a range of tools and strategies, as well as a broad network of support. We need thoughtfully crafted data- and research-driven policy choices that are informed and embraced by the communities these policies will impact. By making PHOCUSED a part of Hawai'i Appleseed, we are integrating our ‘grass-tops’ tools with PHOCUSED's grassroots connections to better achieve the positive changes Hawai'i's residents need.”

Both Hawai'i Appleseed and PHOCUSED have worked to ensure systems meet the needs of and value all people, but have used different approaches. By coordinating their efforts and sharing resources, the organizations seek to maximize their effectiveness in achieving this common goal.

“PHOCUSED was created to help lift up the voices of people who are medically, socially, economically, or otherwise disadvantaged,” said John McComas, Chair of PHOCUSED's Board of Directors. “To be meaningful and successful, policies and system changes need to be informed by the populations they impact. Hawai'i Appleseed has built a strong foundation with its data-driven policy work, and will provide fertile soil in which PHOCUSED can thrive and achieve its potential.”

Hawai'i Appleseed celebrates 15 years of advocacy this year. The organization has focused on conducting research to identify best practices or potential areas for systems improvement, followed by the creation of policy-level strategies to achieve those improved outcomes.

PHOCUSED was created 10 years ago to bring together social service organizations and the people they serve to uncover systemic problems that impact vulnerable communities, to understand how people are impacted by those problems, and to organize stakeholders to successfully advocate for changes that will address those problems.

In becoming a distinct project at Hawai'i Appleseed, PHOCUSED will gain a separate project director/organizer and an advisory council. This model will mirror two other Hawai'i Appleseed programs already in existence: the [Hawai'i Budget & Policy Center](#), which conducts data-driven research on state budget and tax issues; and [Lawyers for Equal Justice](#), which carries out impact litigation to overcome barriers to equity and justice that cannot be resolved through other means.

“We are thrilled about this union of PHOCUSED and Hawai'i Appleseed,” said Joyce Lee-Ibarra, President of Hawai'i Appleseed's Board of Directors. “More and more people—in nonprofits, businesses, government and community—are coming to a shared understanding of the issues facing Hawai'i, and have recognized the benefits of working together to develop solutions. We hope this powerful combination of PHOCUSED and Hawai'i Appleseed will help to usher in a new era where well-designed policies and systems meet the needs of our communities and promote a shared prosperity for all people in Hawai'i.”

###

The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy and coalition building.

PHOCUSED is a non-partisan member advocacy project working to improve the quality of life for the children and adults of Hawai'i who are low-income or under-served, and for whom better access to health and human services, higher wages and housing is critical.