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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**OHA VICE CHAIR DAN AHUNA,
TRUSTEE, KAUA‘I AND NI‘IHAU
CHAIR, OHA AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MAUNA KEA**

Mahalo Chair Machado for the introduction.

Mauna Kea is a deeply sacred place. It’s regarded as a shrine for worship, as home to nā akua, and as the piko of Hawai‘i Island. It is truly one of Hawai‘i’s most special places.

Yet for nearly 50 years, the state has treated the mauna as anything but special. The mismanagement of Mauna Kea is not a new issue. The state and UH have been called to task for their management failures dating back to the 1970s. The community has long recognized that unregulated public access coupled with the astronomy industry’s exploitation of Mauna Kea pose a severe threat to the mountain’s natural and cultural resources.

Generations of Native Hawaiians have expressed outrage over the state’s neglect of the mauna. For decades, OHA has joined our community in advocating at the Legislature, the UH Board of Regents and the BLNR for improved management.

Four state audits have slammed the state and UH’s stewardship of Mauna Kea, and the governor and the university president have both publicly admitted to failing to meet their management responsibilities.

Yet management continues to take a backseat to astronomy.

In response to the most recent round of protests and opposition to more unregulated development, the OHA Board formed an Ad Hoc Committee to more closely assess the issue. We conducted due diligence and looked into the numerous concerns and potential legal issues raised by community members and others regarding the state’s management failures. In 2015,

OHA entered into a mediated process with the state and UH to address these management shortcomings. Ultimately, this nearly-two year process was unsuccessful.

So here we are today, left with no other recourse but to turn to the courts to compel the state to fulfill its legal obligation to properly mālama Mauna Kea. This is NOT about any single telescope. This is NOT about Hawaiian culture versus science.

This is 100 percent about the state and UH failing the mauna. It is finally time to abandon any hope that UH is capable or even willing to be proper stewards. We need to come together as a community to completely re-think how we care for the mauna, and that starts with cancelling the university's master lease while a path forward is developed.

After 50 years of empty promises to the mauna and our community, the state needs to be held accountable. Mauna Kea deserves better.

Mahalo.