



## HAWAII WOMEN'S LEGAL FOUNDATION

### ***Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation Announces Cathy Betts as the 2021 Recipient of the Rhoda Lewis Award***

#### **Media Advisory**

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(HONOLULU, Hawaii) The Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation (HWLF) has awarded Cathy Betts with the 2021 Rhoda Lewis Award in recognition of her extraordinary contribution and commitment to public service. Each year, HWLF presents the Rhoda Lewis Award, named after the first female member of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, to a woman attorney who has devoted her career to public service.

In presenting the award, Lauren Sharkey, HWLF President noted, "Throughout her career and work in the community, Cathy has shown unparalleled grace, resilience, and humility and a quiet and unwavering resolve to do what is right. She is a source of inspiration to many and so richly deserving of this year's Rhoda Lewis Award."

Cathy Betts is the Director of the Hawai'i Department of Human Services, one of the largest agencies in the state, with the vital task of providing safety net services for vulnerable populations to include those who have been economically and sociologically impacted by COVID-19. From 2017 through August 2020, she served as the department's Deputy Director and continues to further the department's vision through her experience, advocacy, and commitment to helping the people of Hawai'i thrive.

A 2006 graduate of the William S. Richardson School of Law, Betts has dedicated much of her life to supporting and advocating for the rights of women and girls as well as families in Hawai'i. She has spearheaded legislation for women promoting and protecting their reproductive freedom and timely access to reproductive health care, their rights as domestic workers, supporting equitable compensation and benefits, increasing protections for breastfeeding women, and helping to ensure safe workplaces for survivors of intimate partner and other forms of gender-based violence.

Betts has led and co-led numerous committees and task forces in Hawai'i addressing issues affecting women and girls including our community's response to domestic violence, addressing the sexual assault evidence collection kit backlog, Title IX compliance, pregnancy discrimination and public accommodation, and safety at our courts as well as securing financial resources to help research a paid family leave program.

She is currently on the Board of Directors for the Hawaii Filipino Lawyers Association, and previously chaired the HSBA Diversity, Equality, and the Law Committee (DEAL). She also sits on the Committee on Equality and Access to the Courts.

As a former practicing attorney, she has litigated divorce and custody cases as well as handled temporary restraining order trials, and child abuse and neglect matters, among others. Betts has served on the Board of Directors for the Hawai'i Women Lawyers and Hawai'i Filipino Lawyers and as a Commissioner of the Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women. She is the former Executive Director of the State of Hawai'i Commission on the Status of Women.

**ABOUT THE RHODA LEWIS AWARD:**

Criteria: Rhoda Lewis Award, which is named after the first female member of the Hawai'i Supreme Court, to a woman attorney who has devoted her career to public service. Consistent with the spirit of the award, the recipient should be one who has toiled in the trenches; one of the "unsung heroes."

**ABOUT HAWAI'I WOMEN'S LEGAL FOUNDATION:**

Hawai'i Women's Legal Foundation, formerly known as the Hawai'i Women Lawyers Foundation, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1982. HWLF is dedicated to programs and projects that benefit women and children in need and promote the advancement of qualified women in all areas of the legal profession.

HWLF through its fundraising activities and events provides grants to worthy Hawai'i organizations who meet its mission.

For more information, visit <https://www.hwlf.org/>.

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