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Revised Standards for Race and Ethnicity Data Collection

A Step Forward for NHPI Communities

(Honolulu, Hawai'i). The Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander Response, Recovery & Resilience Team (NHPI 3R) welcomes the release of the Revised Standards for Race and Ethnicity Data Collection as a crucial step toward more accurate representation of Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander communities.

After almost 30 years, the federal minimum standards for collecting data on race and ethnicity have been updated. This revision, released on March 29th, is a significant development. The NHPI 3R was among many agencies who provided detailed recommendations last year to the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the agency tasked with determining the minimum set of categories that all Federal agencies must use when collecting information on race and ethnicity.

We are pleased to see that our recommendations were adopted as the new standards directly address two critical priorities for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) data: using more detailed categories to support greater data disaggregation and provided guidance that can ensure that all NHPI community members are included in reported statistics.

The expansion of the required categories to include six NHPI checkboxes for data collection (Figure 1) marks an historic moment reminiscent of the addition of the NHPI category to the minimum standard in 1997 after an outpouring of community advocacy. We strongly recommend that these detailed categories be adopted in Hawai'i and urge agencies to implement these standards as quickly as possible.

According to Dr. Joseph Keawe'aimoku Kaholokula, chair of the Department of Native Hawaiian Health at the John A. Burns School of Medicine and NHPI 3R co-chair, "This is an important step toward improving the standardization and collection of more detailed Pacific Islander data, which will allow for better characterization of our diverse Pacific Islander groups to address health disparities and ensure resources get to those communities that need them the most."

Figure 1. New minimum categories for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander race and ethnicity

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – *Provide details below.*

Native Hawaiian

Samoan

Chamorro

Tongan

Fijian

Marshallese

Enter, for example, Chuukese, Palauan, Tahitian, etc.

While these new standards are a significant improvement, it's important to see them as a starting point rather than the final goal for data collection. We support the OMB in encouraging agencies to go beyond these standards by including additional checkboxes and a write-in option whenever feasible.

Tellie Matagi, director of Ka Pūnana at Papa Ola Lōkahi and the NHPI 3R Pacific Islander community lead, emphasized that providing more detailed options will help government employees gather more thorough data and ensure that the community is accurately represented. "When you can identify a person's specific race and/or ethnicity," Matagi explained, "you gain a better understanding of their cultural background, which allows for the development of solutions tailored to the community's needs."

Furthermore, the "alone or combination" approach to reporting multiracial data should become the norm in Hawai'i where more than 1 in 4 individuals identify with two or more races and/or ethnicities. This method of reporting data can ensure that individuals with complex racial and ethnic backgrounds are fully represented.

In conclusion, we applaud these revised standards as a crucial step towards more accurately representing Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander communities in Hawai'i and across the United States. We are committed to advocating for the continued improvement of data collection practices for these communities and look forward to supporting local agencies in the process of implementing these new standards.

Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Response Recovery Resilience (NHPI 3R) is a coalition of more than 60 agencies and organizations focused on leveraging partnerships and collective strengths to best respond to health crises. We are committed to collecting, analyzing, and reporting accurate and relevant data & information; to identifying and lending support to initiatives across the Hawaiian Islands working to address the health & well-being among Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders; and to unifying to establish a presence in the decision-making processes and policies that impact our communities.

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