As Drug Policy Forum of Hawai‘i Celebrates 25th Anniversary, a Changing of the Guard

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HONOLULU, HI – As it commemorates its 25th Anniversary, the Drug Policy Forum of Hawai‘i (DPFHI) is pleased to announce and celebrate the well-deserved retirement of its co-founder Pamela Lichty as the President of its Board of Directors. Together with the late University of Hawai‘i Professor Donald M. Topping, Pam launched DPFHI in 1993, and has helped it become the leading voice in Hawai‘i promoting public health-oriented, common sense approaches to the state’s drug problems. Thousands of Hawai‘i residents have benefitted from the policies she championed, particularly access to medical cannabis and promoting evidence-based harm reduction policies such as the clean needle exchange. Our Board of Directors is proud to announce the selection of Nikos Leverenz as Pam’s successor.

“After 25 years of service, it is time to step down. Despite the many advances we’ve fostered in Hawai‘i, there remains much more to do. It is fitting that in these times, with the resurgent “War on Drugs”, our Board has unanimously selected Nikos as my replacement. He brings a combination of local roots and knowledge alongside his broad experience from California, and this is exactly what is needed to help ensure that Hawai‘i steps up as a leader in drug law reform,” said Ms. Lichty, DPFHI co-Founder and Immediate Past President.

Mr. Leverenz added, “Pam Lichty’s tireless advocacy laid a strong foundation for drug policy reform over the past 25 years, and she will remain an invaluable resource. I am deeply grateful to have a robust board to pursue our shared organizational values of justice, compassion, health, and human rights in the civic square. Over the next year, DPF will work with partner organizations and elected officials on cannabis reform, asset forfeiture reform, corrections reform, sentencing reform, harm reduction, and expanding treatment access. It will also be a steady public voice for government to operate with integrity, transparency, respect, and fairness, particularly with regard to marginalized and underserved populations.”

“Nikos is perfectly suited to build upon Pam’s considerable legacy of serving the people of Hawai‘i with compassion, science and common sense,” said Carl Bergquist, DPFHI
Executive Director. He continued, “I look forward to working alongside him as we continue to recalibrate policies to reflect the simple truth that drug use is a public health, and not a criminal justice, issue.”

On September 8, 2018, DPFHI will formally mark these changes at its 25th Anniversary Gala. The event, at Cafe Julia, will feature prominent local entertainment as well as the dynamic new Executive Director of the New York-based Drug Policy Alliance, Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno.

**Bio for Nikos Leverenz:**

Nikos worked as a legislative advocate, legislative director, and policy consultant in Sacramento, California. Born and raised in Honolulu, he is a graduate of Maryknoll High School, Occidental College, and McGeorge School of Law.