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GOVERNOR



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(ret.)  
**HON. RONALD IBARRA**  
(ret.)  
**TED SAKAI**  
**MARTHA TORNEY**

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## **COMMISSIONER TED SAKAI RESIGNS FROM THE HAWAII CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM OVERSIGHT COMMISSION**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 11, 2023

The Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission regrets to announce the December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, resignation of Commissioner Ted Sakai, an esteemed professional with a longstanding commitment to the field of corrections.

Commissioner Sakai has dedicated five decades of unwavering service to the community of the State of Hawaii as a distinguished public servant. Initiating his career in the 1970s with the John Howard Association of Hawai'i, Commissioner Sakai provided assistance and counsel to individuals in the Halawa jail, and eventually became Executive Director of the John Howard Association of Hawai'i. Since 1979, Commissioner Sakai held various executive positions within the State Department of Public Safety's (PSD) corrections system. Notably, he served as the director from 1998 until his retirement in 2002. In June 2012, Governor Neil Abercrombie persuaded Commissioner Sakai to return for a second term as the Department of Public Safety Director, where he garnered recognition from the Association of State Correctional Administrators (ASCA) with the 2014 Outstanding Director of Corrections Award. The ASCA commended Sakai for expanding programs for incarcerated individuals, enhancing security measures, improving staff recruitment, and advocating for staff well-being. Commissioner Sakai concluded his second tenure with the Department of Public Safety in 2014.

Commissioner Sakai dedicated his life to fostering a more humane corrections system, and his compassion for those in need is immeasurable. In the decade following his initial retirement, Commissioner Sakai continued his dedication by tirelessly working to facilitate programs and services for the children of incarcerated individuals. Additionally, Commissioner Sakai served on many volunteer boards and organizations including serving as volunteer Executive Director for Pu'ulu Lapa'au, assisting healthcare professionals with potential substance use disorders, mental or physical illness, or behavioral concerns. His commitment to addressing the unique challenges faced by incarcerated individuals and people affected by incarceration or substance abuse exemplified his ongoing passion for making a positive impact on the community.

In October 2019, Commissioner Sakai was appointed to the newly established Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission, further contributing his expertise and leadership to the field. During his tenure as Commissioner, Commissioner Sakai actively participated in the Commission's public meetings, conducted thorough facility tours in collaboration with the new

Oversight Coordinator, and consistently emphasized the imperative for enhancements within the state's reentry system.

Chair Mark Patterson, Commissioner Ron Ibarra, Commissioner Martha Torney, Commissioner Mike Town, and Oversight Coordinator Christin Johnson expressed their admiration and respect for Ted Sakai.

"Ted's contribution to the Hawaii correctional system for half a century has been profound, he has shown courage and fortitude in navigating and decision making in a profession so often misunderstood. We will miss his insights." – Mark Patterson, Chair

"Ted really cared about transitioning the correctional system into a rehabilitative system. He brought so much knowledge to the Commission. We will feel his absence. I wish him nothing but the best." – Commissioner Ron Ibarra

"I have worked alongside Ted for over 40 years and there is no one in the State of Hawaii who is as experienced or knowledgeable about all aspects of corrections as Ted Sakai. He has always been held to the highest esteem from his colleagues. From designing programs, to focusing medical and mental health needs to the design of the physical plant, he has always been a mentor, a leader, and a friend. He will be sorely missed on the Commission." – Commissioner Martha Torney

"Ted is a valued colleague and friend who brought such a keen insight to the entire carceral system. We will sure miss him." – Commissioner Mike Town

"I have known Ted for a short period of time yet the impact he has had on me is everlasting. Ted has been a mentor to me from day one, and his insights, historical knowledge, fresh ideas, and determination will be so missed to the Commission. The Commission is fortunate to have had Ted as a founding member." – Christin Johnson, Oversight Coordinator

Commissioner Sakai's resignation marks the conclusion of a distinguished career characterized by unwavering dedication and substantial contributions to the correctional system. The Commission expresses gratitude for Commissioner Sakai's invaluable service and wishes him well.

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