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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Annual ClimbHI Hospitality Industry Student Event Goes Virtual April 9

Businesses are encouraged to register for the 9th-annual Leadership, Exploration, Inspiration (LEI) Program

Honolulu, Hawaii, March 16, 2021 – Hawaii workforce development nonprofit ClimbHI is hosting its first-ever virtual Leadership, Exploration, Inspiration (LEI) hospitality industry program on April 9, 2021, for up to 2,000 students from high school and intermediate schools across the state.

Hawaii businesses and organizations are encouraged to participate in the free event, which is sponsored by the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA). LEI was created by ClimbHI in 2011 to inspire Hawaii's youth to pursue careers in the state's visitor industry by providing them with the means to achieve success. The program has helped thousands of students across the state with networking and hands-on educational opportunities in the hospitality industry.

"As Hawaii continues to reopen to visitors after an unprecedented year of challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, programs like LEI have never been more vital in introducing our students to the many opportunities that await them in hospitality," said John De Fries, president and CEO of the HTA. "LEI is a highlight for HTA and all of the thousands of students and businesses who participate, and we look forward to reaching even more participants with the virtual format this year."

The 2021 virtual LEI program will be held Friday, April 9, 2021, from 9 a.m. to 10:45 a.m., offering a virtual conference, career fair resources, guest speaking opportunities, giveaways, and more. The overall program will include high school and middle school attendees, college interns, and college students in classes with curriculum relating to the LEI program. ClimbHI is working with the Hawaii Department of Education's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program to host the event.

"From the student's perspective, LEI represents an opportunity for Leadership, Exploration and Inspiration. To the hospitality industry, LEI provides an opportunity to Lead, Expose and Inspire Hawaii's youth," said ClimbHI President Julie Morikawa. "The skills and connections fostered by LEI can be applied to so many facets of a student's life, and we are grateful for the continued support of the HTA and our participating schools, businesses and partners."

The conference will also offer virtual exposure of businesses through three videos produced in collaboration with the HTA and visitor industry leaders. The videos will be publicly available following the event at climbhi.org, and also distributed to participating educators and students. Topics will include the value of the hospitality industry in Hawaii from students' perspectives, different careers in a hotel, and other companies and careers that comprise the hospitality industry.

Hawaii businesses and organizations are encouraged to participate in the 2021 virtual LEI event by e-mailing info@climbhi.org by April 6, 2021. In addition, ClimbHI is inviting businesses, associations and nonprofit organizations to sign up for the ClimbHI Bridge online portal. This free portal provides opportunities for students and teachers, including guest speaking, career fair participation, mentorships, and much more. For more information, visit climbhi.org/portals.

About ClimbHI: Founded in 2009, the Hawaii-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit ClimbHI seeks to inspire students to finish high school and proceed to post-secondary education or employment by exposing them to future career paths and the steps necessary to achieve those goals. For more, visit climbhi.org.

About LEI: Leadership Exploration Inspiration (LEI) is a Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA)-sponsored workforce development project created by ClimbHI to inspire Hawaii's youth to pursue careers in the state's visitor industry by providing them with the means to achieve success. The program exposes high school students to potential careers and provides college students with hands-on experience through internships. For more, visit climbhi.org/programs/lei.

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