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### **First Court Hearing in Historic Youth Climate Rights Case Held in Hawai'i**

*Navahine F. v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation argues state's transportation system causes high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, violating youth plaintiffs' state constitutional rights and public trust doctrine*

**HONOLULU, Hawai'i**—Youth plaintiffs and their attorneys in the constitutional climate case [\*Navahine F. v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation\*](#) appeared today before the Honorable Judge Jeffrey P. Crabtree at the Environmental Court of First Circuit in Honolulu to argue the youths' position on why the case should be permitted to move forward.

Over 100 supporters of the youth plaintiffs packed the courtroom and a nearby overflow room, while nearly 150 more watched the proceedings online via Zoom. Supporters in Honolulu joined the youth plaintiffs at a post-hearing [press conference](#) in front of the courthouse, gathering to [sing songs](#) and listen to the attorneys and young plaintiffs describe the hearing.

The youth plaintiffs contend Hawai'i's department of transportation (HDOT) operates a transportation system that emits high levels of greenhouse gasses (GHG), violating their state constitutional rights, causing them significant harm, and impacting their ability to “live healthful lives in Hawai'i now and into the future,” according to Hawai'i's state constitution. Hawai'i is recognized as a leader in state-level climate action, yet HDOT has missed every interim benchmark to reduce overall GHG emissions since 2008. Transportation emissions are already the largest source of climate pollution in the state and are expected to rise 41% over the next decade. The youth plaintiffs are seeking to hold HDOT accountable to ensure they meet the state's goal to decarbonize Hawai'i's transportation sector and achieve a zero emissions economy by 2045.

“Essentially, you saw the State of Hawai'i and its lawyers argue that climate change is a problem that can be dealt with 20 years from now with no accountability today,” said Andrea Rodgers, Senior Litigation Attorney at Our Children's Trust and co-counsel for the youth plaintiffs. “This is

an existential crisis that needs the court's involvement now. The legislature has been very clear in recognizing that. The state government wants to close the courthouse doors on these young people so they cannot explain how climate change is harming them today and threatening their lives in Hawai'i today and into the future."

"The department of transportation is driving Hawai'i off the climate cliff because it refuses to take seriously its constitutional obligations to dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Leinā'ala L. Ley, Senior Associate Attorney in Earthjustice's Mid-Pacific Office, and co-counsel for the youth plaintiffs. "Our political leaders did their job enacting laws that put Hawai'i on a path to climate justice and zero emissions, but the defendants are refusing to implement those mandates. Now we need the court's assistance to make sure the law is followed."

Kalā, one of the youth plaintiffs, stated: "We are here today to hold the state government accountable for their errors. We are here today to be the voice for our grandchildren's grandchildren. The state has known for a very long time about the realities of the climate crisis. We have seen governors give speeches. We have not yet seen action from the executive branch. We need action. Specifically, we need the department of transportation to reverse course and implement clean transportation right now. We are here to remind them of their legal obligation to the people of Hawai'i and most importantly its children. We simply have no other choice. Our future is on the line."

The youth plaintiffs are represented by Andrea Rodgers, Kimberly Willis, and Joanna Zeigler with Our Children's Trust, and Isaac Moriwake and Leinā'ala L. Ley of Earthjustice. This is one of several youth-led constitutional climate lawsuits brought by Our Children's Trust with local counsel like Earthjustice's Mid-Pacific Office.

Our Children's Trust also represents and supports young people in active global and U.S. state climate litigation like *Natalie R. v. State of Utah*, *Layla H. v. Commonwealth of Virginia*, and *Held v. State of Montana* which, when it proceeds to trial in June, will be the first-ever constitutional climate trial, and first-ever children's climate trial, in U.S. history. Our Children's Trust also represents the 21 youth plaintiffs in the landmark federal constitutional climate lawsuit, *Juliana v. United States*, where the youth are currently awaiting a decision in their case that could put them back on the path to trial.

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*Our Children's Trust is the world's only nonprofit public interest law firm that exclusively provides strategic, campaign based legal services to youth from diverse backgrounds to secure their legal rights to a safe climate. We work to protect the Earth's climate system for present and future generations by representing young people in global legal efforts to secure their binding and enforceable legal rights to a healthy atmosphere and safe climate, based on the best available science. [www.ourchildrenstrust.org](http://www.ourchildrenstrust.org)*

*Earthjustice is a premier non-profit public interest law firm committed to environmental justice.*

*We wield the power of the law and the strength of partnership to protect people's health, to preserve magnificent places and wildlife, to advance clean energy, and to combat climate change. [www.earthjustice.org](http://www.earthjustice.org)*