

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 01 2025

RE: GOV. MSG. NOS. 629,
630

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health and Human Services, to which was referred Governor's Message Nos. 629 and 630, submitting for study and consideration the nominations of:

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

G.M. No. 629 MERIAH NICHOLS,
for a term to expire 06-30-2027; and

G.M. No. 630 EVAN NAKATSUKA,
for a term to expire 06-30-2027,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal histories, resumes, and statements submitted by Meriah Nichols and Evan Nakatsuka for service on the State Rehabilitation Council.

MERIAH NICHOLS

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the reappointment of Meriah Nichols from the Department of Human Services.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Ms. Nichols' experience, knowledge, and proven leadership on the State Rehabilitation Council qualify her for reappointment to the State Rehabilitation Council as a member from the County of Hawaii who is a current or former recipient of vocational rehabilitation services. Your Committee notes that, as a person with a



disability and a mother of individuals with disabilities, Ms. Nichols has lived experience spanning the disability continuum and has been an advocate of individuals with disabilities for over thirty years. Ms. Nichols has worked as a blogger and social media influencer for seventeen years, researching, designing, and writing blog posts on disability, parenting, and resources, reaching between thirty thousand and one hundred thousand readers a month. Previously, Ms. Nichols served as a Career Counselor, focusing on students and clients facing barriers to education and employment. Your Committee notes that as a former recipient of vocational rehabilitation services, Ms. Nichols has first-hand experience with the challenges of having a disability and navigating within a world of misconceptions of what a youth or adult with a disability can do. Your Committee further finds that Ms. Nichols has previously served on the California State Rehabilitation Council, and has been on the State Rehabilitation Council since 2021, and therefore has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of its members. Your Committee believes that Ms. Nichols' experience and knowledge will continue to be assets to the State Rehabilitation Council. Your Committee therefore recommends that Meriah Nichols be reappointed to the State Rehabilitation Council based on her experience, knowledge, and commitment to public service.

EVAN NAKATSUKA

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the reappointment of Evan Nakatsuka from the Department of Human Services and one individual.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Mr. Nakatsuka's experience, knowledge, and proven leadership on the State Rehabilitation Council qualify him for reappointment to the State Rehabilitation Council as a member representing business, industry, and labor. Your Committee notes that Mr. Nakatsuka has over fifteen years of experience managing, directing, and coordinating programs and projects with an emphasis on preparing individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce. Mr. Nakatsuka has been working as the Director of Workforce Programs for Lanakila Pacific since 2019, where he provides leadership on developing new initiatives to build independence for people with cognitive, physical, social, or age-related challenges. Previously, Mr. Nakatsuka was the Junior Specialist-Project Coordinator for the Postsecondary Support Project at the Center on Disability Studies, where he coordinated



a federal grant- and state-funded program supporting college students with disabilities throughout the University of Hawai'i System. Your Committee further finds that Mr. Nakatsuka has been serving on the State Rehabilitation Council since 2020, including serving as its chairperson, and therefore, has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities as its member. Mr. Nakatsuka's experience and knowledge, especially on how best to prepare individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce to fulfill the demand of employers, will continue to be assets to the State Rehabilitation Council. Your Committee therefore recommends that Evan Nakatsuka be reappointed to the State Rehabilitation Council based on his experience, knowledge, and commitment to public service.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committee on Health and Human Services that are attached to this report, your Committee, after full consideration of the background, experience, and qualifications of the nominees, has found the nominees to be qualified for the positions to which nominated and recommends that the Senate advise and consent to the nominations.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Health and Human
Services,



JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, Chair



The Senate
 Thirty-Third Legislature
 State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Health and Human Services
HHS
Advise and Consent

Governor's Message No.:* GM 630	Committee Referral: HHS	Date: 2/25/25		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise and Consent 2340 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Advise and Consent 2345				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A. (C)	✓			
AQUINO, Henry J.C. (VC)	✓			
HASHIMOTO, Troy N.	✓			
KEOHOKALOLE, Jarrett	✓			
FEVELLA, Kurt				✓
TOTAL	4			1
Recommendation:				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature:				
Distribution: Original File with Committee Report Yellow Clerk's Office Pink Drafting Agency Goldenrod Committee File Copy				

*Only one Governor's Message per Record of Votes