

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 21 2025

RE: GOV. MSG. NOS. 680,  
681, 686

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

Sir:

Your Committee on Hawaiian Affairs, to which was referred Governor's Message Nos. 680, 681, and 686, submitting for study and consideration the nominations of:

ISLAND BURIAL COUNCIL - ISLAND OF HAWAII

G.M. No. 680	LEIMANA ABENES, for a term to expire 06-30-2029;
G.M. No. 681	CYRUS SETO, for a term to expire 06-30-2029; and
G.M. No. 686	SHANTEL FREEMAN, for a term to expire 06-30-2029,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal histories, resumes, and statements submitted by Leimana Abenes, Cyrus Seto, and Shantel Freeman for service on the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i.

LEIMANA ABENES

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Leimana Abenes from the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Ms. Abenes' background and dedication to the preservation of



Hawaiian cultural practices qualify her to be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, as a member representing Kohala. Your Committee notes that Ms. Abenes has worked in the field of Hawaiian cultural education since 1990. She is currently a performing artist and entertainer, singing traditional Hawaiian music locally and internationally. She previously taught Hawaiian Studies to high school students on Hawai'i Island as a Kumu Kāko'o. Ms. Abenes has strong genealogical connections to the Kohala district and was raised to uphold her familial cultural and linguistic traditions, including Native Hawaiian healing and spiritual practices. She considers the protection of iwi kupuna to be a guiding principle in the resolution of difficult decisions faced by the Island Burial Councils. Your Committee finds that Ms. Abenes has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of council members and her extensive experience in traditional Hawaiian cultural practices will enhance the effectiveness of the Council. Your Committee therefore recommends that Leimana Abenes be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, based on her unique cultural awareness, advocacy for indigenous traditions, and indispensable knowledge of the land of Kohala.

#### CYRUS SETO

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Cyrus Seto from the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Mr. Seto's extensive work and educational background in Hawaiian Studies qualify him to be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, as a member representing Hilo. Your Committee notes that Mr. Seto has been a professional educator in the field of Hawaiian language and culture since 2009. He received his Doctorate in Education from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2022 and has conducted several specialized conference presentations on indigeneity in education. Mr. Seto currently teaches 'Ōlelo Hawai'i at Nā Wai Ola Public Charter School, and he previously taught the Hawaiian language at several other schools and university campuses across the State. He has participated in the repatriation and care of iwi kupuna on multiple islands over the past twenty years, and has strong, established connections to Hilo, where he was raised. Your Committee finds that Mr. Seto has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of



council members and his prioritization of indigenous epistemology will enhance the effectiveness of the Council. Your Committee therefore recommends that Cyrus Seto be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, based on his lived commitment to 'Ōlelo Hawai'i, place-based knowledge, and understanding of Hawaiian cultural values.

SHANTEL FREEMAN

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Shantel Freeman from the Department of Land and Natural Resources.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Ms. Freeman's cultural expertise and community-based advocacy qualify her to be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, as a member representing Puna. Your Committee notes that Ms. Freeman has worked in community health and education since 2023. She is currently a Health Education Program Assistant at Hui Mālama Ola Nā 'Ōiwi and a Quality Improvement Specialist for Wellcare By 'Ohana Health Plan. Previously, she held several public-facing office and retail positions, enhancing her ability to work well with others. Ms. Freeman has been a lifelong practitioner of Native Hawaiian cultural practices and ancestral stewardship. She has participated in preparing and protecting iwi kupuna in Waipi'o Valley and Pauka'a, adding to her deep sense of responsibility in upholding traditional practice and protocol. Ms. Freeman has genealogical ties to Moku o Keawe and currently resides in Puna. Your Committee finds that Ms. Freeman has a thorough understanding of the role and responsibilities of council members and her commitment to working with the Puna community will enhance the effectiveness of the Council. Your Committee therefore recommends that Shantel Freeman be appointed to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, based on her background in cultural education, advocacy, and research.

As affirmed by the records of votes of the members of your Committee on Hawaiian Affairs 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 Hawaiian Affairs

  
HERBERT M. RICHARDS, III,  
Chair



The Senate  
Thirty-Third Legislature  
State of Hawai'i

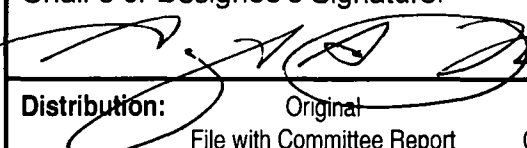
**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Hawaiian Affairs**  
**HWN**  
**Advise and Consent**

Governor's Message No.:* <b>GM 680</b>	Committee Referral: <b>HWN</b>	Date: <b>4/10/25</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise and Consent 2340         </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Not Advise and Consent 2345         </div> </div>				
<b>Members</b>	<b>Aye</b>	<b>Aye (WR)</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Excused</b>
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (C)	/			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A. (VC)	/			
IHARA, Jr., Les	/			
KEOHOKALOLE, Jarrett	/			
DECORTE, Samantha	/			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>			
Recommendation: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 5px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted         <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted         </div>				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: left;"> <b>Distribution:</b>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">             Original File with Committee Report           </div> <div style="text-align: center;">             Yellow Clerk's Office           </div> <div style="text-align: center;">             Pink Drafting Agency           </div> <div style="text-align: center;">             Goldenrod Committee File Copy           </div> </div>				

**\*Only one Governor's Message per Record of Votes**

The Senate  
Thirty-Third Legislature  
State of Hawai'i

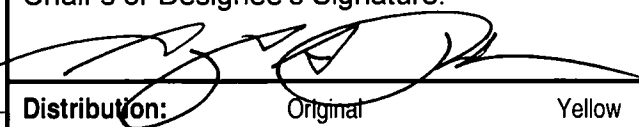
Record of Votes  
Committee on Hawaiian Affairs  
HWN  
Advise and Consent

Governor's Message No.:* <b>GM 681</b>	Committee Referral: <b>HWN</b>	Date: <b>4/10/25</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise and Consent 2340</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Advise and Consent 2345</div></div>				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (C)	/			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A. (VC)	/			
IHARA, Jr., Les	/			
KEOHOKALO, Jarrett	/			
DECORTE, Samantha	/			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>			
Recommendation: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted</div>				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: small;"><div>Original File with Committee Report</div><div>Yellow Clerk's Office</div><div>Pink Drafting Agency</div><div>Goldenrod Committee File Copy</div></div>				

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**Record of Votes**  
**Committee on Hawaiian Affairs**  
**HWN**  
**Advise and Consent**

Governor's Message No.:* <b>GM 686</b>	Committee Referral: <b>HWN</b>	Date: <b>4/10/25</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advise and Consent 2340</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Advise and Consent 2345</div></div>				
<b>Members</b>	<b>Aye</b>	<b>Aye (WR)</b>	<b>Nay</b>	<b>Excused</b>
RICHARDS, III, Herbert M. "Tim" (C)	/			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A. (VC)	/			
IHARA, Jr., Les	/			
KEOHOKALOLE, Jarrett	/			
DECORTE, Samantha	/			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>			
Recommendation: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: 				
Distribution:      Original      Yellow      Pink      Goldenrod File with Committee Report      Clerk's Office      Drafting Agency      Committee File Copy				

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