

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

Testimony of
DAWN N. S. CHANG
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on
WATER AND LAND

Wednesday, March 12, 2025
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229

In consideration of
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 530
SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO
THE BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,
KAREN ONO
FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE JULY 30, 2028

Governor's Message 530 submits for consideration and confirmation, Karen Ono, to the Board of Land and Natural Resources. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports this nomination.**

Ms. Ono was first nominated to the Board of Land and Natural Resources in 2022. She collaborates well with both Department staff and fellow Board members. Always well prepared, she asks insightful questions, aiming to ensure that Board policies best serve Hawai'i's natural resources.

Ms. Ono served as an Executive Officer for the Kauai Board of Realtors for more than 40 years. Over the years, she has taken on various roles, including the review of governing documents, processing payroll, and writing grants and legislative testimony. Her extensive experience with the organization provides her with a deep understanding of land use on Kaua'i, as well as a commitment to getting the job done.

In addition, Ms. Ono has represented the Board of Realtors Association on the Chamber of Commerce, the Kauai Business Council and the Rice Street Business Association, maintaining regular contact with over 600 members. She will bring this wealth of knowledge about Kaua'i to the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

Ms. Ono graduated from Kauai Community College with an Associate's Degree in Clerical Science. She has consistently represented Kaua'i well and will continue to do so on the Board.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Karen Ono.

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.
Felicia Cowden
Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawai'i 96766

March 7, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF FELICIA COWDEN
COUNCILMEMBER, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON**

**GM 530, Gubernatorial Nomination of Karen Ono to the
Board of Land and Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Water and Land
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Inouye and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong SUPPORT of GM 530, Gubernatorial Nomination of Karen Ono to the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) for a term to expire on June 30, 2028. I am submitting my testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Kaua'i County Council.

Ms. Ono has continued her position as a Kaua'i Representative on BLNR in an excellent capacity, making her decisions consistent with State laws and statutes. I recognize her integrity to the Hawai'i Constitution, even when I have not agreed with some of the outcomes of her votes. Her dedication to understanding the details of topics across the islands is evident, and she willingly shares fresh understanding of evolving State policies with constituents and policymakers on Kaua'i and throughout the State. I can always count on her to quickly respond with informed answers to my policy questions. Similarly, my experience with her former leadership role at the Kaua'i Board of Realtors (KBR) consistently exceeded my expectations, particularly with her ability to understand land use policy needs and convey that knowledge as a valuable community partner.

Additionally, Ms. Ono's empathetic, understanding, and patient demeanor builds trust and respect among colleagues and the public as she confronts the significant economic displacement issues that face our island while balancing these challenges with environmental and land use needs.

Ms. Ono's professional experience is complemented and strengthened by her attendance and active participation in a range of government-sponsored meetings, policy development discussions, environmental events, and volunteer activities.

Chair Inouye and Members of the Committee

Re: GM 530, Gubernatorial Nomination of Karen Ono to the Board of Land and
Natural Resources

March 7, 2025

Page 2

I am confident that Karen Ono's reappointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources would be a prudent decision that will continue to benefit our entire State. For this reason, I humbly ask you to advise and consent to Honorable Governor Green's nomination and forward to the full Senate for their consideration.

Thank you in advance for your favorable consideration of Karen Ono's nomination to the BLNR as well as for this opportunity to provide my testimony in support of GM 530. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Felicia Cowden".

FELICIA COWDEN
Councilmember, Kaua'i County Council

RM:ss

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/4/2025 9:55:39 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Godfrey Akaka	Testifying for The Native Hawaiian Gathering Rights Association	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We submit strong support for Karen Ono in BLNR position. Mahalo.

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/5/2025 12:18:26 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pua Chin	Testifying for Hui Makaʻainana o Makana	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We strongly recommend the reappointment of Karen Ono as the Kauai representative on the Board of Land and Natural Resource.

Commissioner Ono has been an active advocate for and is informed on the issues we are currently facing with regard to DLNR on our island. She has proven her willingness to engage and discuss multiple topics that may be of concern to our Kauai organizations and community groups. Her open and honest communication is a tremendous and invaluable asset.

We respectfully ask you support and approve her reappointment.

Mahalo,

Pua Chin, Executive Director, Hui Makaʻainana o Makana



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF KAREN ONO
Board of Land & Natural Resources
COMMITTEE ON WATER AND LAND
Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee on Water and Land,

I am honored to submit this testimony in strong support of the nomination of **Karen Ono** to the **Board of Land & Natural Resources**.

Karen Ono is an individual of exceptional integrity, deep commitment to environmental stewardship, and extensive experience in land and resource management. Her proven leadership and dedication to balancing conservation efforts with responsible land use make her a highly qualified candidate for this role.

Throughout her career, Karen has demonstrated a deep understanding of Hawaii's unique natural resources, recognizing the critical need to protect and manage them for future generations. Her experience in working with stakeholders, policymakers, and community members has equipped her with the skills necessary to navigate complex land and natural resource issues with fairness, wisdom, and foresight.

Given her expertise and unwavering dedication to preserving Hawaii's natural beauty and resources, I strongly urge the committee to confirm **Karen Ono** for the **Board of Land & Natural Resources**. I am confident that her service will greatly benefit the people of Hawaii and the responsible stewardship of our lands and waters.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Joel Guy

Executive Director



www.hanaleiinitiative.org



March 7, 2025

Senator Lorraine R. Inouye
Chair, Senate Committee on Water and Land
Hawai'i State Capitol, Rm. 210
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: March 12, 2025 Confirmation Hearing for Karen Ono / Board of Land & Natural Resources

Aloha Chair Inouye and Members of the Senate Committee on Water and Land:

I would like to submit this **Letter of Support** for Karen Ono as a member of the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR). Karen has done a great job representing the Hawaiian Islands and has listened to the visitor industry, as well as the community on different issues. I especially appreciate the dedication Karen Ono has given to this important volunteer position that focuses on the management of our natural resources.

Mahalo nui loa in advance for your time and consideration.

With Aloha,

Susan A. Kanoho
Managing Director/Island Chapters
Executive Director
Kaua'i Visitors Bureau

LATE

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 3:24:25 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Support

March 12, 2025

Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Water and Land
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 229 & Videoconference
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: GM 530 - Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Land and Natural Resources, Gubernatorial Nominee, KAREN ONO, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support** of GM 530 regarding the confirmation of Ms. Karen Ono's appointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources.

I have known Ms. Ono for over 20 years. She brings to the Board and to the State valuable knowledge and perspective and, given her deep understanding of Hawaii's natural resources and her commitment to their preservation, she align perfectly with the state's goals. Her presence on the Board will be a catalyst for innovative approaches to conservation and resource management.

We are incredibly fortunate that Ms. Ono, now retired, has chosen to dedicate her time and expertise to public service. Her diverse background and wealth of experience will bring a new dimension to the Board's deliberations.

It is our good fortune that Ms. Ono is retired and can bring her values and breadth of experience to the Board and the public.

I ask for the Committee's support of Ms. Ono.

Myoung Oh

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/4/2025 9:08:29 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doreen Canto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of GM530.

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/4/2025 9:33:58 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bettina Navarro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Karen Ono for a term to expire 6/30/2028. Mahalo

GOV. MSG. NO. 530

Subject: Testimony in Support of Karen Ono

To the Board of Land and Natural Resources:

My name is Darlene Miyazaki, and I am currently working for the DLNR Division of Boating and Ocean Recreation and a former Secretary to the Board of Land and Natural Resources for several years. I am writing to express my strong support for Karen Ono and her continued service on the Land and Natural Resources Board.

I have had the opportunity to observe Karen's contributions to the board while serving as the Land Board secretary, and I have consistently been impressed by her dedication supporting our communities on all islands. Karen is fearless when faced with controversial submittals dealing with our natural resources and the effects on the health and safety of our communities. Her dedication, insightful contributions are an asset to State of Hawaii and her home Island of Kauai where she engages with the community through social media by providing information on events, County and Public meetings that may have an impact on the community.

In conclusion, I believe that Karen Ono's continued service on the Board of Land and Natural Resources is essential on providing a positive impact when it comes to protecting the Public Trust for the present and future generations of the people of Hawaii. Her passion to serve and protect make her a valuable asset to the board and the community it serves. I strongly urge you to support her continued service.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Darlene Miyazaki

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/5/2025 1:01:00 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tom Shigemoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I hereby submit my wholehearted support for a friend and professional, Karen Ono, for reappointment to the State of Hawaii Board of Land and Natural Resources. I've known Karen for more than 20 years and in all the years have found her to be responsible, trustworthy and diligent in her capacity as the leader of the Kauai Board of Realtors and with working with her on the numerous non-profits she served in. She has always been forthright in her decision making, with the public's best interest. She understands the importance of protecting the environment but also the importance of balancing such protections against the use of State lands for other important and necessary needs, such as housing and recreation.

I believe her record of attendance and actions speak for themselves and I encourage your committee to vote positively in her reappointment. Mahalo



January 29, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to show my support for the reappointment of Karen Ono to the BLNR as our Kauai Representative.

Karen is an asset to our community and to the State of Hawaii to say the least. She has been involved in so many facets of the community over the years that her knowledge is invaluable. Not only is her knowledge invaluable, but with all of the years of involvement brings great insight as she has been through so many administrations, economic cycles and has been well tapped into the ever changing landscape of our State throughout this time.

Karen understands the landscape of our past and she has the ability to make sound decisions for the future of our State, taking everything into consideration.

I highly support the reappointment of Karen Ono as I know she will seek the best interest of our community whether the decision is easy or hard to make. She will assist to lead our lands into the future in the most responsible way possible.

Should you have any further questions or would like to discuss my support for Karen Ono in further detail, please feel free to reach out to me at christyl@tabarealty.com to schedule an appointment.

Me Ke Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christyl Nagao", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christyl Nagao
Partner

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/5/2025 7:13:30 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christine Faye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Karen Ono as a member on the Board for the Division of Land and Natural Resources. She has been a true and fair representative for the people of Kauai. Please reselect her for this position.

I am the executive director at Hui o Laka. We operate the Kokee Natural History Museum and the Civilian Conservation Corps Camp at Kokee State Park. I have watched many televised board meetings and feel that Ms. Ono has been our island's best representative in many years.

Aloha for your consideration

Christine Faye

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/6/2025 9:35:34 AM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Kinney	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the WAL Committee,

I am writing to urge you to reappoint Mrs. Karen Ono to a second term on the Board of Land and Natural Resources. Karen has been one of, if not, the most appropriate representative for the islands of Kauai and Niihau during her first term and it would benefit us greatly to have her serve as second term. Karen represents us and takes our issues very seriously when they come before the Land Board. She has always taken the time to meet face-to-face, approach issues and places at a personal level, and gotten to know the resources and informations before addressing them.

When it comes to leadership, I appreciate Mrs. Ono for her coming out and seeing first-hand what complex issues look like and what solutions might be. I believe this is the most important requisite to making informed and balanced decisions in relation to the Land Board. I would also note that Mrs. Ono seems to work well and speaks amiably amongst other BLNR members and with Chair Dawn Chang. While they can have different opinions on some difficult issues, she has always remained cordial and polite while firmly expressing her opinion. This makes her an effective leader and representative for our islands and communities. Again, I urge and support Mrs. Ono's reappointment!

**Trinette P. Kaui
243 Koili Lane
Kapaa, HI 96746**

March 6, 2025

The Honorable Lorraine Inouye
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 210
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Letter of Support for Karen Ono's Reappointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources

Dear Senator Inouye and Members of the Senate:

I am writing to express my strong support for the reappointment of Karen Ono to the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR). As a dedicated member representing the island of Kauai, Karen has proven to be an outstanding liaison and advocate for our community and our environment.

Karen's commitment to preserving the natural beauty and cultural significance of Kauai is unmatched. Over the course of her tenure on the BLNR, she has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of the challenges facing our island's natural resources and a genuine passion for ensuring that those resources are protected for future generations. Her ability to collaborate with stakeholders from all backgrounds, whether residents, government agencies, or environmental organizations—has been a testament to her leadership and diplomatic skills.

One of Karen's most notable qualities is her unwavering dedication to listening to the concerns of Kauai residents and ensuring that our voices are heard at the state level. She has made it her priority to foster open communication and build strong relationships between the BLNR and our island community. This has allowed her to be an effective advocate for policies that reflect the needs and values of Kauai, while also balancing the broader goals of sustainability and conservation for the state of Hawaii as a whole.

Karen's passion for the land, culture, and people of Kauai is evident in all that she does. She has been a tireless advocate for initiatives that protect our unique ecosystems, promote sustainable development, and preserve the rich cultural heritage that makes Kauai so special. Her leadership has been invaluable, and I have no doubt that her continued service on the BLNR will only further benefit our island and our state.

In closing, I wholeheartedly support Karen Ono's reappointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources. Her experience, dedication, and tireless advocacy for Kauai make her an invaluable asset to BLNR, and I am confident that she will continue to serve with the highest level of integrity and commitment.

Thank you for considering this letter of support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trinette P. Kauai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and a long, sweeping underline.

Trinette P. Kauai

COUNTY COUNCIL

Mel Rapozo, Chair
KipuKai Kualii, Vice Chair
Addison Bulosan
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Fern Holland
Arryl Kaneshiro



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK

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Council Services Division
4396 Rice Street, Suite 209
Lihu'e, Kaua'i, Hawaii 96766

March 7, 2025

**TESTIMONY OF MEL RAPOZO
COUNCIL CHAIR, KAUAI COUNTY COUNCIL
ON**

**GM 530, Gubernatorial Nomination of Karen Ono to the
Board of Land and Natural Resources
Senate Committee on Water and Land
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 229
Via Videoconference**

Dear Chair Inouye and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in my capacity as an individual member of the Kaua'i County Council fully supporting Karen Ono for reappointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) for a term to expire on June 30, 2028.

During Ms. Ono's prior years of faithful service with the BLNR, she exuded integrity and the Aloha Spirit, while also refining her already impressive skillset that was developed over many years in various leadership roles. Her background as the long-time Executive Director for the Kaua'i Board of Realtors from April 1979 to December 2021 honed her sense of place and instilled the ability to interpret new legislation. Due to her prior involvement with the Chamber of Commerce, the Kaua'i Business Council, and the Rice Street Business Association, Ms. Ono demonstrated her depth of community involvement and leadership skills in a way that promoted dialogue and respect. Furthermore, I know that her contributions alongside the County Planning Department as part of the Public Access, Open Space, Natural Resources Preservation Fund Commission, helped revitalize Rice Street, one of the island's main thoroughfares.

I am confident that Ms. Ono's reappointment to the Board of Land and Natural Resources would bring positive impact to the State of Hawaii and County of Kaua'i; therefore, I humbly ask for you to advise and consent to Honorable Governor Green's nomination and forward to the full Senate for their consideration.

Chair Inouye and Members of the Committee

Re: GM 530, Gubernatorial Nomination of Karen Ono to the Board of Land and
Natural Resources

March 7, 2025

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Thank you for your favorable consideration of Karen Ono's nomination to the BLNR as well as for this opportunity to provide testimony. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Council Services Staff at (808) 241-4188.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mel Rapozo', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

MEL RAPOZO
Council Chair, Kaua'i County Council

RM:slr

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 1:54:16 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelden Yagin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support GM530.

Riley William Smith, P.E.
65-1174 Kahawai Street
Kamuela, Hawaii 96743
(808) 936-7129
rsmith@lanihau.net

March 7, 2025

Senator Ron Kouchi, President
Senator Lorraine Inouye, District 1
Senator Dru Kanuha, District 3
Senator Tim Richards, District 4

Via email: senkouchi@capitol.hawaii.gov
seninouye@capitol.hawaii.gov
senkanuha@capitol.hawaii.gov
senrichards@capitol.hawaii.gov

**Re: Letter of Support – Karen Ono
Board of Land and Natural Resources – GM 530
Water and Land Committee, March 12, 2025**

Aloha President Kouchi, Senators Inouye, Kanuha, Richards:

My name is Riley Smith. I am a lifelong resident of the State of Hawaii and have lived on Hawaii island since 1993. As you may know, I am the Hawaii island representative on the Board of Land and Natural Resource. I first met Ms. Ono, when I was confirmed to BLNR during the summer of 2022. We have served together for the last 2-1/2 years. I find that Ms. Ono always arrives prepared for our meetings, she reads all of the information provided, she queries the staff on items that are unclear and is also extremely knowledgeable about the issues, specific to the island of Kauai.

With her background in real estate, she understands property management, real estate title issues and how to work towards resolution of disputes between property owners. I cannot think of an issue on Kauai that has come before our Board, that she didn't know about, didn't research or didn't come prepared to decide on. She represents her island and our State very well.

I highly recommend that you re-confirm Ms. Ono to serve another term on the Board of Land and Natural Resources. Should you have any questions, feel free to call or email me.

Mahalo,



Riley W. Smith. P.E.

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/8/2025 12:29:14 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nathaniel Fisher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator Chair Lorraine Inouye, Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair and members of the Water and Land Committee,

I am honored to write this character reference for Karen Ono, a dedicated and deeply embedded member of our Kaua'i community. Karen is widely respected for her fair and rational approach to complex issues, always considering multiple perspectives with an open mind. Her deep understanding of local concerns, combined with her extensive qualifications, makes her an outstanding candidate for the BLNR board member position.

Karen's commitment to Kaua'i runs deep, and she has consistently demonstrated her ability to balance community needs with thoughtful decision-making. She is a strong advocate for responsible stewardship, ensuring that our island's resources are managed wisely for both present and future generations. Her experience, integrity, and unwavering dedication to the people and environment of Kaua'i make her an invaluable asset to any leadership role.

I strongly support Karen Ono's appointment to the BLNR board and am confident that her leadership will serve our community well.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

-Nathaniel Fisher

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/10/2025 4:19:32 PM

Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary R. Begier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The commitment and integrity that Karen Ono has brought to this body in the past few years speaks volumes! Please extend her term. I strongly support the extension of her service. Mary Begier

LATE

GM-530

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 8:36:34 PM
Testimony for WTL on 3/12/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kamealoha Hanohano-Smith	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kamealoha Hanohano Pa-Smith
Wailua, Kaua‘i (PO Box 194, Kapa‘a, Hawaii 96746)
khs96703@gmail.com | 808-212-4356
March 11, 2025

Chair Lorraine R. Inouye
Senator, District 4
Chair, Water and Land Committee
Hawai‘i State Capitol
415 S. Beretania St., Room CR229
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Subject: Strong Support for GM 530 – Confirmation of Karen Ono to the Board of Land and Natural Resources

Dear Chair Inouye and Members of the Water and Land Committee,

I am writing in strong support of GM 530, the consideration and confirmation of Ms. Karen Ono to continue serving on the Board of Land and Natural Resources (BLNR) for a term expiring on June 30, 2028. Given the critical challenges facing Hawai‘i today—particularly in balancing commercial development, affordable housing, and environmental and cultural stewardship—it is essential to have experienced, thoughtful, and community-minded leaders on the Land Board. Ms. Ono has proven over the past four years that she is the right person for this role, and I wholeheartedly support her reappointment.

As a resident of Wailua, Kaua‘i, and a Native Hawaiian Practitioner with over 30 years of experience in ‘āina-based land and ocean resource management, I have had the privilege of working closely with Ms. Ono on important land and ocean resource issues. Over the past four years, I have witnessed firsthand her ability to navigate the complexities of land and resource management in a way that is culturally appropriate, fair, and solution-driven. Raised in the valley of Hule‘ia, she embodies the rare ability to keep one foot firmly in Hawai‘i’s traditional values and the other in the realities of the modern world—an invaluable trait for a Land Board Commissioner.

Ms. Ono brings a wealth of experience to this role. Her long-standing career in Hawai‘i’s real estate industry, including over 40 years as the association executive for the Kaua‘i Board of REALTORS®, has given her deep insight into the economic and social challenges our communities face. Throughout her tenure, she has consistently demonstrated a commitment to making *pono* (just and fair) decisions by actively engaging with the community, listening to diverse perspectives, and carefully weighing all aspects before taking action. She is known for her willingness to assist residents in navigating the DLNR system and for ensuring that government processes remain accessible to all.

Her extensive leadership roles—including serving on the Government Affairs Committee, the Kaua‘i Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Rice Street Business Association—further highlight her ability to bridge the gaps between government, business, and community. At a time when Hawai‘i is at a pivotal crossroads, facing economic, environmental, and housing crises, we need leaders like Ms. Ono who have a proven track record of bringing stakeholders together to find innovative and equitable solutions.

I firmly believe that Ms. Karen Ono’s knowledge, experience, and deep-rooted commitment to Hawai‘i make her the ideal candidate to continue serving on the Board of Land and Natural Resources. Her ability to balance economic realities with environmental and cultural concerns is exactly what Kaua‘i—and our state—needs at this crucial moment in our history.

I respectfully urge you to support her confirmation and allow her to continue her vital work for our community and our state.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Kamealoha Hanohano Pa-Smith

Native Practitioner and Kumu Aloha ‘Āina, MA/PD

Wailua, Kaua‘i

khs96703@gmail.com | 808-212-4356