

Evan Nakatsuka

February 21, 2025

Amelia Dudley
Office Manager
Office of Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 213
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Ms. Dudley,

Thank you for considering my nomination to the State Rehabilitation Council. Here is my testimony for the SRC.

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

I've dedicated my career to supporting people with disabilities to access employment, post-secondary education, and public transportation and I believe my experience helping people access these areas are of value to the State Rehabilitation Council. I can speak to the service provider needs and identify ways the Vocational Rehabilitation system can better serve job seekers with disabilities and employers in the community.

2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

The SRC provides input and works in partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to review, analyze, and advise VR regarding the program's performance and processes. The SRC does this by helping to analyze and distribute the statewide consumer needs assessment, reviewing VR performance data, and providing a platform for stakeholders and community members to contribute their ideas, priorities, and concerns.

3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the board.

I have worked in the field of disability services for sixteen years and have a Master's of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. I have overseen various VR-contracted job placement and training services and have experience working directly with people with disabilities in a job placement, job coaching, travel training, and postsecondary support

capacity. I have also advocated for people with disabilities with dozens of private employers in the community and am aware of the challenges and opportunities that people with most significant disabilities face while pursuing competitive, integrated employment.

4. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

I'd like to work collaboratively with other councils and partners to help braid resources available to people with disabilities. Awareness of services and resources is an ongoing need and helping the public build awareness of the VR program and what people with disabilities can accomplish is a focus area. Likewise, helping the public VR system recruit, train, and retain VR staff is an ongoing need. Supporting educational pathways and awareness of the vocational rehabilitation field for professionals is a high priority.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will {benefit} the State Rehabilitation Council.

Passionate- I truly love seeing people with disabilities accomplish their goals. That is my primary reason for serving in the field of vocational rehabilitation and with the SRC.

Empathetic- I try to see the perspective of others and understand that my viewpoint is limited. As much as I try, I'll never totally understand the diverse needs of the community of people with disabilities. I believe this quality and awareness will help me remember that a key purpose of the SRC is to elevate the voices of people with disabilities to provide input and guidance to VR.

Imperfect- Like everyone, I'm flawed and need to show grace to all involved with the VR process. Individuals with disabilities and those who serve them face challenges in the process and it's important for me to be understanding and patient, reminding all of us that we're here with the same goal to support the field of vocational rehabilitation and the people it serves.

6. Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a member.

Serving on the SRC from 2020 to 2023 was a beneficial experience that influences my current term on the SRC. From 2020 to 2023, I learned about the various mandated partners in the public workforce system and the functions of the SRC. That initial experience gives me better context of the role of the SRC at that time and how I and the Council can continue to make a positive impact of VR.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the State Rehabilitation Council. How would you overcome conflicts of interest?

Yes. I've been a contracted service provider with Vocational Rehabilitation for fifteen years and have many mentors and friends from this community. I will need to be mindful to abstain from discussion or voting on matters that could directly benefit me or my employer.

Sincerely,

Evan Nakatsuka

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GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
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February 26, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator San Buenaventura, Chair Senate
Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Ryan I. Yamane, Director
Lea Dias, Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: **GM630 – RELATING TO CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE STATE
REHABILITATION COUNCIL, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, EVAN NAKATSUKA, FOR
A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2027.**

Hearing: Friday, February 28, 2025, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference, State Capitol

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: The Department of Human Services (DHS) strongly supports the nomination and confirmation of Evan Nakatsuka to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

PURPOSE: The SRC was established by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The SRC works in partnership with the DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on services that address the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Nakatsuka is seeking an appointment to the SRC as a representative of Business, Industry, and Labor per section 348-8(a)(5), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), as established under section 796d of 29 U.S. Code § 725.

Mr. Nakatsuka is the Director of Workforce Programs at Lanakila Pacific, a non-profit organization with a mission to build independence for people with cognitive, physical, social or age-related challenges. Mr. Nakatsuka assists individuals with disabilities that hope to become rehabilitated and return to employment. Mr. Nakatsuka's area of expertise is needed on the

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council to advise DVR on how best to prepare individuals with disabilities entering the workforce to fulfill the demands of employers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Mr. Nakatsuka's nomination to the State Rehabilitation Council.

GM-630

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 2:51:46 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I totally support Mr Nakatsuka's appointment to The Hawaii State Rehabilitation Council. I used to be his client at Abilities Unlimited. Evan helped me immensely with my vocational goals, and I know that he will be able to learn, and impart/receive wisdom and guidance to and from his fellow council members.

Mahalo for reading this endorsemeent.