

**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**

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**DAWN N.S. CHANG**  
CHAIRPERSON  
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CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of  
DAWN N. S. CHANG  
Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on  
HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
Thursday, April 10, 2025  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 224 and Via Videoconference**

**In consideration of  
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 680  
SUBMITTING FOR THE CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE ISLAND  
BURIAL COUNCIL, ISLAND OF HAWAII, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,  
LEIMANA ABENES FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2029.**

**The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports Governor's Message 680, nominating Ms. Leimana Abenes to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawaii, expiring June 30, 2029.**

The Island Burial Councils are established under Section 6E-43.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes. The Councils determine whether to preserve in place or relocate previously identified native Hawaiian burials site, recognize lineal and cultural descendants, and provide counsel and advise to the Department. With the exception of the Moloka'i Island Burial Council, the island burial councils consist of no more than nine members, of which six representatives shall represent a specific geographic area, and no more than three shall be representatives of development and large landowner interests. Ms. Abenes is seeking to represent the Kohala geographic area.

Ms. Leimana Abenes has strong genealogical connections to the Kohala district that she wishes to represent. She was raised by her maternal grandparents to uphold their family cultural and linguistic traditions which include native Hawaiian healing and spiritual practices. She considers the protection and preservation of Hawaiian cultural practices a serious and sacred kuleana. Ms. Abenes' ties to Kohala are further reflect through her familiarity and indispensable knowledge of the 'āina.

Ms. Abenes has had significant professional experience in Hawaiian cultural education since 1990, through which she has also stressed the importance of properly perpetuating the integrity of Hawaiian traditions. She has demonstrated an understanding of the difficulties that can arise in the decisions made

by the Island Burial Councils and considers the protection of iwi kupuna a guiding principle in the resolution of difficult dilemmas.

Senate confirmation will ensure that Ms. Abenes' unique cultural knowledge and perspective may inform the deliberations of the Hawai'i Island Burial Council until June 30, 2029.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this nominee.