

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

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA**

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

**DAWN N.S. CHANG**  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
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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 681  
SUBMITTING FOR THE CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE ISLAND  
BURIAL COUNCIL, ISLAND OF HAWAI'I, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,  
CYRUS SETO, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2029.**

**The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports Governor's Message 681, nominating Dr. Cyrus Seto to the Island Burial Council, Island of Hawai'i, expiring June 30, 2029.**

The Island Burial Councils are established under Section 6E-43.5, Hawai'i 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. Mr. Seto is seeking to represent the Hilo geographic area.

Mr. Seto's extensive work and educational background provides him with expertise on matters in Hawaiian culture, language, and values, and his experiences demonstrates his commitment to the preservation, revitalization, and transmission of Hawaiian knowledge, both in academic and community settings. He has been an advocate for the protection of iwi kupuna, having participated in the repatriation and care of iwi kupuna and moepū on multiple islands over the past 20 years. Mr. Seto was raised in Hilo and has strong, established connections to the community in which he seeks to represent.

In addition, Mr. Seto has taught Hawaiian language and culture across all grade levels, from kindergarten to the university level, and has done so through an 'ōiwi lens that prioritizes indigenous epistemologies. Mr. Seto currently serves as a kumu 'ōlelo Hawai'i at Nā Wai Ola Public Charter School, a Hawaiian and

community based educational organization, and was previously involved in many other culturally grounded programs for institutions like Kamehameha Schools, Hālau Kū Mana, Nā Pua No‘eau, the University of Hawai‘i, and various Hawaiian language immersion schools. He integrates cultural values and place-based knowledge into his curriculum, which often includes traditional practices such as oli, hula, lauhala weaving, and traditional agriculture aligned with lunar cycles.

Senate confirmation will ensure that Mr. Seto’s lived commitment to ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, ‘ike kūpuna, and Hawaiian values positions him to advocate on deliberations of the Hawai‘i Island Burial Council until June 30, 2029.

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