

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII'Ī
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

March 5, 2025

To: The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
The Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Labor and Technology Committee

Date: Friday, March 7, 2025
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 224, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: G.M. 690, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, JARED HIGASHI, for a term to expire 06-30-2029.

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations **supports** the confirmation of Jared Higashi to the Workforce Development Council.

Mr. Higashi has 11 years of government and community experience, particularly through his role at the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association. There, he led workforce development initiatives involving high school and university internships, mentorships, and scholarship programs that promote careers in the visitor industry.

Tourism is Hawaii's largest industry, accounting for about one-fifth of the state's gross product and generating billions in revenue. In recent years, the visitor industry has faced a decline in the available workforce pipeline, and it is crucial that we remain proactive to ensure its economic success now and in the future.

Mr. Higashi's experience will be invaluable in addressing the needs of the visitor industry. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is confident that his addition to the Workforce Development Council will be crucial in effectively addressing the pressing workforce and economic development challenges we face across Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 690.



SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
Friday, March 7, 2025 — 3 p.m.

The Workforce Development Council supports GM 690.

Dear Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

We are Keith DeMello and Tuia'ana Scanlan, members of the State of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (WDC) delegated with the authority to represent the WDC's legislative policy positions. Pursuant to [HRS Chapter 202](#), the WDC is the policy and planning advisor to the State on workforce development matters. It is comprised of both public, labor, and private-sector representatives appointed by the Governor to serve on the basis of their interest in and knowledge of workforce development programs in Hawai'i and how to support economic development throughout the state.

The WDC strongly supports GM 690, which submits for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jared Higashi, for a term to expire 06-30-2029.

As Vice President of Government and Community Affairs at the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Mr. Higashi brings valuable expertise in workforce development within Hawai'i's largest industry. He has demonstrated success in creating pathways to employment through high school internships, university-level mentorship programs, and scholarship initiatives.

His experience in building partnerships between public and private sectors, combined with his leadership in the 2023 Pacific Century Fellows program and as founder of Hospitality's Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs, provides an important perspective for the WDC's mission to develop Hawai'i's workforce. Mr. Higashi's appointment will strengthen the Council's connection to tourism industry stakeholders while bringing fresh insights to our workforce development strategies.

We respectfully urge the Committee to recommend approval of this nomination.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith DeMello
Member, WDC

Tuia'ana Scanlan
Member, WDC

March 7, 2025

To: Senator Henry Aquino, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Member of the Senate Committee on Labor & Technology

From: Jared Ellis

RE: GM690

My name is Jared Ellis, and I am writing to express my unequivocal support for the appointment of Jared Higashi to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

I have known Mr. Higashi personally for nearly 20 years and had the pleasure of working with him for a number of years at The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association. When you consider his personal character alongside his professional experience, it is clear that he is an exceptional selection to serve on this Council.

Professionally speaking, Mr. Higashi has extensive experience in government affairs and a wealth of knowledge pertaining to workforce development initiatives and the various factors that surround local workforce development efforts. Having worked in government and the nonprofit sectors, he possesses unique qualifications that make him well-suited to this role.

Personally speaking, I hold Mr. Higashi in the highest regard and would work with or for him again in an instant. He cares deeply about Hawai'i and its people, and this would inform his time on the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. My confidence in him cannot be overstated.

For these reasons, I strongly support GM690.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

LATE

March 6, 2025

Daniel Nahoopii

1311 Ekaha Ave

Honolulu, HI 96816

daniel.nahoopii@gmail.com

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY: 690 GM Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, gubernatorial nominee, JARED HIGASHI, for a term to expire 06-30-2029.

Aloha Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair, Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in enthusiastic support of the confirmation of **Jared Higashi** to the **Hawaii Workforce Development Council**. I am confident that his wealth of experience, leadership, and commitment to the people of Hawaii will make him a tremendous asset to the Council.

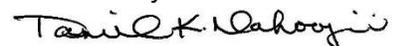
Jared currently serves as the **Vice President of Government & Community Affairs** for the **Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA)**. With over 10 years of experience in the industry, Jared has played a pivotal role in advancing key initiatives that have shaped Hawaii's tourism landscape. HLTA has supported many workforce development initiatives such as its Generational Mentoring Program. He has honed his leadership skills and deepened his understanding of workforce development challenges and opportunities in our state. His time at HLTA has equipped him with a strategic approach to addressing the needs of Hawaii's workforce, particularly in the context of tourism and hospitality.

Jared's contributions to the Council will be informed by his hands-on experience with workforce initiatives and his passion for advancing policies that ensure economic opportunity for all of Hawaii's residents.

Additionally, Jared's longstanding involvement with organizations such as the **Visitor Aloha Society of Hawaii** and his participation in the **Pacific Century Fellows Program** further demonstrate his leadership in civic and community affairs. These roles highlight his ability to work collaboratively with a diverse set of stakeholders and his dedication to improving Hawaii's workforce and community well-being.

Jared is uniquely qualified to contribute to the important work of the Hawaii Workforce Council. His expertise in government relations, community affairs, and workforce development, combined with his passion for Hawaii's success, positions him to be a valuable member of the Council. His leadership will help advance policies that promote economic mobility, education, and workforce resilience in our state. I strongly support Jared Higashi's confirmation to the Hawaii Workforce Council and believe he will continue to serve the people of Hawaii with integrity, dedication, and vision.

Mahalo for your consideration.



Daniel Nahoopii