



The Senate Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 19th, 2025

Aloha :

Congratulations on your nomination to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. To assist the Hawaii State Senate with its confirmation process, we request that you submit the following information to our office no later than February 21st, 2025, to ensure that we proceed in a timely manner:

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities?
 - a. I have had the privilege of serving the disability community for the past 15 years both in Hawai'i and in Washington, DC/Northern Virginia, so to me this is a logical progression in my efforts to promote inclusion and equity for those with disabilities. I have worked in several capacities over the past 15 years and have experience and wisdom that would be helpful to the Board should I be confirmed.
2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.
 - a. The roles and responsibilities of a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities include:
 - i. sharing knowledge and experiences with the Council that can be used to support the disability community in Hawai'i
 - ii. working together on projects that support the services and systems necessary to allow those with disabilities and their families to grow and thrive
 - iii. promote inclusion equity, self-determination and other opportunities for those with disabilities so they are able to participate in their communities like their neurotypical peers
3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities as a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, 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.

- a. I am qualified to be a member of the Council because I have spent the past 15 years serving the disability community in multiple capacities and can bring wisdom and experience to the role.
 - i. I started my career in disability services as the director of operations and programs for Best Buddies in Virginia & DC (BBVADC) and oversaw the school friendship, supported employment and leadership programs and their staff. I spent time in schools and in the community learning what our students with disabilities and their families needed, and I also wrote and reported on various government and foundation grants. As a regional/state director, I met with government officials to advocate for the disability community and reached out to corporate and private donors to build out exceptional fundraisers that benefited our participants and programs. When I started at Best Buddies in 2013, we had an annual budget of \$357,000 and when I left in December 2019 it had grown to \$1.2 million. Over seven years in Virginia & DC we tripled our staff, tripled the number of participants across the region, and built out several new programs that served children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).
 - ii. I moved to Best Buddies in Hawai'i (BBHI) in January of 2020 and while the pandemic initially hampered our ability to grow, as it did for all non-profits, our two-person team created a host of online programming to continue supporting our participants. We opened two adult friendship programs – the first of their kind in Hawai'i – online so that adults with IDD could find a larger community, we created Half-Hour Heroes sessions with a new guest host sharing his or her passion/job/hobby/information every week, and we even opened new school chapters on Moloka'i and Lāna'i. Upon my resignation from Best Buddies in Hawai'i in January 2024, we had doubled both our staff and our annual budget, and had received a large grant to open a work readiness training program.
 - iii. I came to United Cerebral Palsy Association of Hawai'i (UCPAH) as the education and community outreach program manager and was made a program manager for the South Early Intervention Team eleven months later. I now manage a team of nine direct support providers and care coordinators who currently serve the 96817, Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam and Lanakila regions. Like my other leadership roles, this position requires timeliness, reporting to government funders, keen management skills, knowledge of the communities we serve, and a love for our youngest residents with delays and disabilities.
 - iv. I also volunteer for several organizations, with only some related to disability, so that I can serve our greater community. My skill set is extremely varied given all of the roles I've held, and I am passionate about showing kuleana.

4. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?
 - a. I hope to meet more individuals dedicated to inclusion and equity for the disability community, I would love to collaborate on at least one new program/project that benefits the DD community, and I look forward to sharing resources among my peers.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.
 - a. Honest
 - b. Collaborative
 - c. Reliable
 - i. Honesty is vital at every organization, and I make a point of being open and transparent, even when the news I need to share is “not good”. I am a team player and highly value collaboration because it allows everyone to learn something new as they work together create the best possible outcome(s). I also believe it’s important that when I say I’m going to do something, I do it. The only way to facilitate trust and growth in a team/service setting is to do what you’ve promised and do it well.

6. Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a member.
 - a. One of the most stressful situations in my career came in March 2020, six weeks after I moved my family to Honolulu to work as the BBHI state director, because the whole world shut down due to the pandemic. Not only was it a terrifying time personally, but all of my well-planned projects and goals for BBHI were suddenly worthless and my only other staff member was furloughed for eight weeks. While fighting for her return, I began to brainstorm ideas for engagement I thought might work online, I used Zoom relentlessly as I’d already been using it for Board meetings on the mainland, and I called teachers/advisors and participants who didn’t yet know me to ask for help in building a video grant application for Maui United Way (due in April) and to support my efforts to create wholly virtual activities. I implemented the programs as best I could and used the relationships I’d just built, as well as my knowledge of the organization’s history and its connections, to begin planning a virtual friendship walk, our first fundraiser on my watch. While there were certainly hiccups in all of these processes, patience and a bit of time allowed us to grow and eventually thrive.

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

- a. I do not foresee any potential conflicts of interest during my service on the Council, but should something arise, I would be honest and transparent with the Chair so that we could address the issue appropriately.
- b. Mahalo for the opportunity to serve on the Council. I am truly grateful.

Please be aware that testimony submitted to committees – including your responses to the above questions - is posted on the Legislature’s website; you may wish to remind individuals who intend to submit testimony on your behalf of the public nature of the testimony.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Here is the link to your nomination on the State Capitol website:

Mahalo,

Amelia Dudley
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Office of Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura
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STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
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April 7, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: GM 758 - State Council on Developmental Disabilities Gubernatorial Nominee
Karen Glasser

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **STRONGLY SUPPORTS GM 758 to confirm the nomination of Ms. Karen Glasser for a term to expire 06-30-2026.**

The Council's Federal mandate (P.L.106-402) is clear in determining the composition of this body to ensure that all the players involved in the development, implementation, and use of Developmental Disabilities (DD) supports are represented. The law specifically requires each Council shall include representatives of relevant State and Private entities related to individuals with disabilities. The law specifically requires that 60 percent of the membership of the Council be comprised of individuals with DD, their parents, or family members. The following type of agency is required to be on the Council: private non-profit organizations concerned with services to individuals with DD.

The Governor's nominee meets the Federal requirement for the Council to be represented by individuals who work in systems supporting individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Ms. Karen Glasser brings over a decade of leadership in nonprofit and disability-focused organizations, including her impactful work with Best Buddies Hawai'i and the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Hawai'i. Her deep expertise in program development, policy advocacy, and inclusive community engagement aligns with the Council's mission. Ms. Glasser's dedication to equity and her ability to build partnerships across agencies make her a valuable asset to the Council. Her voice reflects a systems-level understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing individuals with developmental disabilities in Hawai'i today.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our **strong support for GM 758** to confirm Ms. Karen Glasser to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



The Honorable Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Thirty third Legislature
State Capitol, State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senator San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

SUBJECT: GM 758 - Gubernatorial Nominee, Karen Glasser

The Hawaii Self-Advocacy Advisory Council (SAAC) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS GM 758**, the confirmation of Karen Glasser to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities for a term to expire 06-30-2026.

Karen Glasser is a strong advocate for people with disabilities. She is a great example to others in supporting people with disabilities. She participated in her community by working and supporting Best Buddies Hawaii as the Director for nearly 10 years. She has collaborated with disability agencies and has brought awareness of people with disabilities to the larger community in Hawaii. She has been a strong supporter of the Hawaii Self-advocacy Advisory Council. She is now working to support families with Cerebral Palsy and is committed to creating a positive and supportive environment for those families facing the challenge of raising children with cerebral palsy.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support of GM 758**.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Renken", written over a horizontal line.

Sincerely,

Timothy Renken

President of the Hawaii Self Advocacy Council

e-mail: zosimo.arista@doh.hawaii.gov SCDD website: <http://hiddcouncil.org/> HISAAC website: <http://hisaac.org/>

GM-758

Submitted on: 4/6/2025 10:30:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Gibo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Testimony in Strong Support of GM758 – Karen Gasser
Submitted by: Melissa Gibo

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Melissa Gibo, and I am writing in strong support of Governor’s Message 758, nominating Karen Gasser to serve as a member of the Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

I have had the privilege of working closely with Karen through our shared commitment to inclusion and advocacy, particularly during her tenure as Director of Best Buddies Hawai‘i. Karen was a tireless champion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, always bringing warmth, energy, and deep empathy to every event, meeting, and initiative. Her ability to connect with people — whether they were students, families, or self-advocates — was truly inspiring.

Karen’s leadership is grounded in lived experience, community collaboration, and a strong belief in equity. She understands the importance of building inclusive spaces and policies that serve all of Hawai‘i’s diverse communities. Her professional insight, combined with her heartfelt dedication, makes her an ideal candidate for this role.

I have no doubt that Karen Gasser will bring compassion, thoughtfulness, and a strong work ethic to her position. I respectfully urge the committee to confirm her nomination under GM758.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,
Melissa Gibo

GM-758

Submitted on: 4/5/2025 10:53:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karen Glasser	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I would be honored to serve on the State Council of Developmental Disabilities and am in strong support of GM758.

Much mahalo,

Karen L Glasser