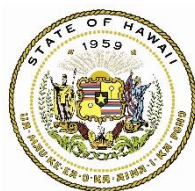


DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



LESLIE WILKINS  
CHAIRPERSON

ALLICYN C.H. TASAKA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
830 Punchbowl Street, Suite 417, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Phone: (808) 586-8630 Web: <http://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/>

February 24, 2021

To: The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair  
The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021  
Time: 3:00 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 225

From: Allicyn Tasaka, Executive Director  
Hawaii Workforce Development Council

**Re: GM 595 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawaii  
Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jason Brand, for a term  
to expire at 06-30-2024.**

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts. I am Allicyn Tasaka, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Council (WDC) testifying in strong support of Mr. Jason Brand's confirmation to the WDC for a term to expire on June 30, 2024. Mr. Brand would fill a slot reserved for a business executive member on the Council.

The WDC is responsible for the administrative oversight and implementation of a federally mandated initiative, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). Additionally, the WDC assists the Administration develop and update statewide comprehensive, strategic workforce development plans and actions to align and streamline the public workforce development system for continuous improvement and accountability. It supports employment opportunities for employers and employees through direct services at the American Job Centers throughout the State.

Mr. Brand is President of the Brand Industrial Group, Inc. and co-founder of Kuna Country Farms. He also is the Chair of the USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers, as well as President of the Hawaii Foundation for Agriculture Research.

During his interim appointment, Mr. Brand has participated in the WDC board meetings. We hope to create an Agriculture Committee with his leadership which would address sustainable farming and aquaculture, agriculture modernization, and economic opportunities, among others.

With Mr. Brand's experience in agriculture, business acumen, strategic solutions, and commitment to Hawaii, Mr. Brand would be a valuable asset to the WDC and in helping to build our workforce.

I urge your Committee to confirm Mr. Brand to the WDC.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Mr. Brand's nomination.

February 23, 2021

To: Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: Jason Brand  
Brand Industrial Group Inc, President  
Kunia Country Farms, LLC, Co-Founder  
Ko Hana Distillers / Ko Hana Farms, Co-Founder

RE: GM 595 Gubernatorial Nominee Jason Brand to the Workforce Development Council for  
a term to expire June 30, 2025  
Hearing: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 225 and Video

POSITION: Strong Support

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts, I am Jason Brand, President of Brand Industrial Group Inc, and Co-Founder of Kunia Country Farms, LLC and Ko Hana Distillers / Ko Hana Farms, testifying in strong support of my own confirmation to the Workforce Development Council (WDC) for a term to expire on June 30, 2024 and available to answer questions as needed.

I have been a resident of the State of Hawaii for the past twelve years, relocating to the islands after retirement from a successful career as the president of Merrill Lynch in Asia. In Asia, I oversaw a multi-billion dollar business encompassing over 5,000 employees, operating across many cultures, languages, and countries.

I have been blessed in work and in life. My wife and I have a family of three children, two of whom were born here. We seek to give back to our new community by giving our time to projects of education, of culture, and most importantly, through creating employment opportunities in sectors that we care about.

To date, we directly or indirectly have created eight new corporations in Hawaii. Within the state, our ventures in agriculture capture the most attention. Kunia Country Farms, LLC was created to help reduce the State's need to import food from the mainland. We added two caveats to this main goal. First, we had to choose a grow methodology that was environmentally friendly, while being mindful of the economics of the business. Second, we had to reduce food prices for the island. The farm has successfully operated for over a decade, producing over 250,000 lbs of lettuce locally per year with little to no net electricity, no net water, and no use of the soil.

Ko Hana Farms and Ko Hana Distillers expand Hawaiian agriculture and Hawaiian manufacturing, while telling the story of one of the most useful canoe plants – ko – and what it means to be a steward of the land. The businesses employ people from all parts of the island, with backgrounds in technology, in agriculture, in the service industry, and in the sciences. Of note, Ko Hana's place in agriculture is one of export and manufacturing – a subset of the farming

world that differs from Kunia Country Farms' goal of food production.

Passion for these businesses, passion for our families, and passion for the world around us provides motivation for me in my daily life. I would like to help make our community a better place. Using my experiences in finance and agriculture, I chair the USDA Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers to the Secretary of Agriculture. There, we strive to represent the problems that face younger/newer members of agriculture and provide potential solutions. Locally, I lead the Hawaii Foundation for Agricultural Research and its mission to help further the science behind farming as part of the Hawaiian Agriculture Research Center family.

The opportunity to become part of the Workforce Development Council is a continuation of my existing efforts to help build a better community. I would like to share my experience in entrepreneurship, finance, management, and agriculture as Hawaii looks to its future post COVID. I respectfully urge you to confirm myself as a member of the Workforce Development Council where I can be a valuable asset to the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Brand', with a stylized, sweeping flourish at the end.

Jason Brand  
Brand Industrial Group Inc, President  
Kunia Country Farms, LLC, Co-Founder  
Ko Hana Distillers / Ko Hana Farms, Co-Founder

**ALAN S. HAYASHI**  
**207-4 Kawaihae Street**  
**Honolulu, Hawaii**

February 24, 2021

To: Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: Alan S. Hayashi, Vice Chair  
Workforce Development Council

RE: GM 594 thru GM 605 **Gubernatorial Nominees:** Charles Shima / Jason Brand / Kira Higa / Ian Kitajima / Brian Tatsumura / Cary Miyashiro / Ken Loui / April Chun Acquavella / Brian Lee / Jason Bradshaw, to the Workforce Development Council for varying terms to expire June 30, 2023 to June 30, 2025

Hearing: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 225

POSITION: Strong Support for GM 594 thru GM 605

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts, I am Alan Hayashi, Vice Chair of the Workforce Development Council (WDC) testifying in strong support of ALL ABOVE LISTED NOMINEES for confirmation to the WDC for varying terms to expire on June 30, 2023 thru June 30, 2025. The Nominees would fill slots reserved for designated sectors on the Council.

The WDC is an attached agency to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and is responsible for advising the Governor and Legislature on workforce development to support economic development and employment opportunities for employers and employees. The WDC is the State Workforce Development Board for purposes of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. The WDC assists the Governor in developing and updating comprehensive, strategic workforce development plans and oversees publicly funded workforce investment activities in the state.

All Nominees are well qualified and leaders in their respective organizations and sectors. We on the WDC Board feel fortunate to have such diverse talent willing to join the effort to provide job opportunities and skills training for our community

In this critical year, WDC has been implementing the Hawaii WIOA Unified State Plan. The plan covers the six core formula grant programs authorized under WIOA and outlines the state's vision and strategy for carrying out activities under each program. The WIOA plan is a Federal requirement in order for Hawaii to receive the bulk of federal funding for the State's primary job training and placement activities.

I respectfully urge you to confirm all submitted Nominees as members of the Workforce Development Council where they will be valuable assets to the deliberations of the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.





**GM-595**

Submitted on: 2/24/2021 6:33:56 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Richard Wacker	Testifying for American Savings Bank	Support	No

## Comments:

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Regarding: GM 595 Gubernatorial Nominee Jason Brand to the Workforce Development Council for a term to expire June 30, 2024

POSITION: Strong Support

I am Richard Wacker, President and CEO of American Savings Bank, and I am testifying in strong support of Mr. Jason Brand's confirmation to the Workforce Development Council for a term to expire on June 30, 2024.

Mr. Brand would fill a slot reserved for a private sector business member on the Council.

The WDC assists the Governor in developing and updating comprehensive, strategic workforce development plans and oversees publicly funded workforce investment activities in the state.

Jason Brand is an experienced international banking expert turned local businessman, farmer, and entrepreneur. His successful local businesses include Kunia Country Farms and Manulele Distillers, both of which have won numerous awards for innovative and high quality products. Kunia Country Farms was an early and most successful adopter of aquaponic farming techniques that have multiplied the farm's output while remaining an extraordinarily efficient (nearly zero) consumer of water and other inputs. During the COVID crisis he redirected the distillery to production of hand sanitizer and cleaning products and was a generous donor to worthy causes especially in the community.

With his breadth of experience in businesses both large and small, international and local, Mr Brand will be a very valuable resource for the Council. Moreover, he is one of the most creative and determined business leaders I have met, and his contributions to the quality of the Council's deliberations and pursuit of new and effective ideas will be



significant. Those skills, combined with his passion to create more opportunity and a more vibrant economy for the people of Hawaii, make him an excellent candidate for the Council.

I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Brand as a member of the Workforce Development Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.



# ***Kunia Country Farms LLC***

***P.O. Box 152 Kunia, HI 96759 [www.kuniacountryfarms.com](http://www.kuniacountryfarms.com)***

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To: Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair  
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair and  
Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: C. Scott Wo, Owner/Executive, C. S. Wo & Sons, Ltd.  
Partner, Kunia Country Farms LLC

RE: Nominee Jason Brand to the Workforce Development Council

Hearing: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 225

POSITION: Strong Support

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts. I am Scott Wo, Owner/Executive of C. S. Wo & Sons and Partner of Kunia Country Farms, testifying in strong support of Mr. Jason Brand's confirmation to the Workforce Development Council for a term to expire on June 30, 2024.

I have known and worked with Mr. Brand for over a decade as founding partners of Kunia Country Farms, one of Hawaii's largest aquaponic farms producing leafy greens for local markets and restaurants. In that time, I have come to know Mr. Brand on a personal level, and can attest not only to his superior business expertise and knowledge, but to his unquestioned high character, and his dedication to his family. Mr. Brand also possesses vast managerial and financial experience from his previous career at Merrill Lynch, overseeing all of the Firm's Pacific region operations. With his background as an entrepreneur, and his managerial, financial, and agricultural experience, Mr. Brand is well suited to make meaningful contributions to the Workforce Development Council.

I respectfully urge you to confirm Mr. Jason Brand as a member of the Workforce Development Council where he would be a valuable asset and contributor to the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

C. Scott Wo

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***Locally Grown, Sustainably Grown  
Zero Impact Farming!***



Email: [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CULTURE, & THE ARTS  
Wednesday, February 24, 2021 — 3:00 p.m.

**Ulupono Initiative supports GM 595, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, JASON BRAND, for a term to expire 06-30-2024.**

Dear Chair Taniguchi and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Director of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food; renewable energy and clean transportation; and better management of freshwater and waste.

**Ulupono supports GM 595.** Jason Brand is a leader in Hawai'i's agricultural industry and an active voice for local farmers. His companies, which include Kunia Country Farms and Ko Hana Distillers, have shown how innovative technology can transform local markets with economies of scale. Whether it is utilizing aquaponics to provide fresh, local lettuce to consumers or processing native sugar cane to offer local spirits, Jason Brand provides a unique perspective that can add to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. While our State recovers from the pandemic and looks to diversify its economy, it is important to have innovative minds to support workforce development, especially those that are connected to Hawai'i's food system.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata  
Director of Government Affairs

*Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i*

999 Bishop Street, Suite 1202 | Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813 ☎ 808.544.8960 📠 808.432.9695 | [www.ulupono.com](http://www.ulupono.com)