

STAND. COM. REP. NO.

1428

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 28 2023

RE: GOV. MSG. NO. 512

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2023
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Health and Human Services, to which was referred Governor's Message No. 512, submitting for study and consideration the nomination of:

DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

G.M. No. 512 CATHERINE BETTS,
for a term to expire at noon on
12-07-2026,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Catherine Betts for service as the Director of the Department of Human Services.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the reappointment of Catherine Betts from the Office of the Governor; Department of Labor and Industrial Relations; Department of Land and Natural Resources; Department of Transportation; Department of Agriculture; Department of Taxation; Department of Budget and Finance; Department of Defense; Department of Health; Executive Office on Early Learning; Hawaii Public Housing Authority; Crime Victim Compensation Commission; Office of Enterprise Technology Services; Office of Planning and Sustainable Development; Hawaii Family Support Institute; AlohaCare; Hawai'i Primary Care Association; Early Childhood Action Strategy; Parents and Children Together; Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!; Hawaii Association of Health Plans; Hawai'i Public Health Institute; Healthcare Association of Hawaii; Hawai'i State



Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Hawaii Friends of Civil Rights; Domestic Violence Action Center; Pū'ā Foundation; EPIC 'Ohana, Inc.; Child and Family Service; Partners in Development Foundation; SanHi Government Strategies, LLP; and twenty-seven individuals. Your Committee received testimony in opposition to the nomination for the reappointment of Catherine Betts from the Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform, Hawaii Family Advocacy Group, and three individuals.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Director Betts' experience, knowledge, and proven leadership as the Director of the Department of Human Services (Department) qualify her for reappointment as the Director of the Department. Director Betts has a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles and her Juris Doctorate from the William S. Richardson School of Law. Director Betts has served as the Director of Human Services since September 2020 and has spent the last twenty years serving the people of Hawaii in various roles in the field of human services. Her dedicated service has enabled her to gain an intimate understanding of the operations of the Department, the mission it serves, and the needs and concerns of many hardworking team members in the offices and divisions that carry out the Department's functions.

Your Committee further finds that prior to serving as the Director of Human Services, Director Betts served as Deputy Director for three years where she worked closely with the Social Services Division's Child Welfare Services Branch to improve staff morale and retention, ensure increased staff training and communication with the Judiciary and community partners, and maximize federal funding mechanisms for the Division. Director Betts has also previously served as the Executive Director of the Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women; as an attorney in private practice handling family law, divorce, and custody matters; as a Deputy Attorney General in the Family Law Division where she handled child abuse and neglect cases and represented the Department of Health in involuntary commitment hearings; and as a community outreach and educator at the Sex Abuse Treatment Center at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children. Her extensive experience in both the public and private sector, and with the Department in various roles, has enabled her to be a strong advocate for children, families, and residents that face many burdens and challenges across the State.



During Director Betts' service as Director of Human Services, she has delivered many accomplishments for the Department, despite the challenges imposed by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic. Director Betts has effectively managed the Department's operations, policy, budget decisions, and approximately two thousand employees. Under her leadership, Director Betts has fostered cross-sector collaboration, cultivating relationships with community stakeholders, nonprofits, and national policy organizations, and has been a valued partner in policy conversations with regard to social programs and services, housing, public health and safety, and other desperately needed services to assist Hawaii's most disadvantaged populations. She has also chaired numerous task forces and working groups and convened city, county, and state agencies and community stakeholders, to ensure initiatives and solutions were centered in and driven by the community. Notably, during Director Betts' tenure, the State implemented 'Ohana Nui, a multigenerational approach and framework to eliminating intergenerational poverty for Hawaii's families. The implementation of 'Ohana Nui under Director Betts' leadership demonstrates Director Betts' capacity for adapting evidence-based strategies that build upon the unique strengths of Hawaii's families and individuals to address their equally unique and complex needs. Evolving the Department into a modern, employee-responsive workforce is an area that Director Betts has identified for improvement, and her compassionate, empathetic leadership will help recruit and retain qualified professionals at a time when human services organizations across the country, including the Department, are experiencing critical staffing shortages.

Your Committee further finds that Director Betts is an active participant in her community and has demonstrated a commitment to public service. Director Betts currently serves on the Committee on Equality and Access to the Courts and on the Board of Directors for the Hawaii Filipino Lawyers Association. Your Committee additionally notes the testimony submitted on behalf of Director Betts that substantiates the integrity, compassion, and collaborative spirit with which she leads and dedicates herself to the State and community.

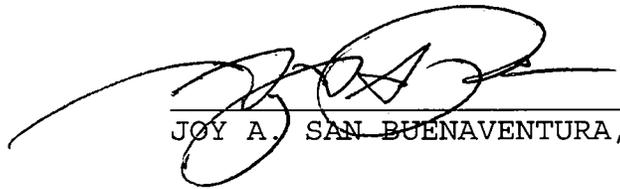
Your Committee finds that Director Betts' leadership abilities, professional experience, and accomplishments will continue to be an invaluable asset to the Department of Human Services, the State of Hawaii, and its residents, especially those of vulnerable and marginalized communities. Your Committee



therefore recommends that Catherine Betts be reappointed as the Director of Human Services based on her extensive knowledge, background, and dedication to serving the public.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Health and Human Services that is attached to this report, your Committee, after full consideration of the background, experience, and qualifications of the nominee, has found the nominee to be qualified for the position to which nominated and recommends that the Senate advise and consent to the nomination.

Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Health and Human
Services,



JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, Chair



