

STAND. COM. REP. NO. **2889**

Honolulu, Hawaii

MAR 01 2024

RE: GOV. MSG. NO. 532

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
Regular Session of 2024
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Higher Education, to which was referred Governor's Message No. 532, submitting for study and consideration the nomination of:

BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

G.M. No. 532 LAUREN AKITAKE,
for a term to expire 06-30-2028,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Lauren Akitake for service on the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the nomination for the appointment of Lauren Akitake from the University of Hawaii Professional Assembly; Law Offices of Marvin S.C. Dang; and one hundred seven individuals.

Upon review of the testimony, your Committee finds that Ms. Akitake's experience, knowledge, and desire to serve as a regent for the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii qualify her for appointment as a regent representing Maui County pursuant to section 26-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes. Your Committee finds that Ms. Akitake presently serves as a private practice attorney and per diem district court judge for the Second Circuit. Your Committee notes that, according to the personal statement submitted by Ms. Akitake, the Judiciary confirmed she can serve as a Regent while serving as a per diem District Court Judge. As a private practice attorney, Ms. Akitake has over



fifteen years of experience in diverse areas of law, including estate planning, civil litigation, business law, and conservatorship and guardianship proceedings. Ms. Akitake is also a recognized member of the Hawaii legal community, serving as a 2020 Hawaii State Bar Association Leadership Institute Fellow, 2016 Hawaii Emerging Legal Practitioners Access to Justice Fellow, and a former Maui County Bar Association board member. Additionally, Ms. Akitake is an active member of her community, serving as a board member of Women Helping Women and as co-President nominee of the American Association of University Women of Maui. Ms. Akitake holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of Kansas School of Law and a Master of Science in Applied Social Research from the University of Stirling, Scotland. Your Committee notes that Ms. Akitake understands the roles and responsibilities of board members, and her extensive experience in the practice of law and prior teaching experience at the University of Hawaii Maui College will be assets to the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii.

Your Committee further finds that Ms. Akitake has served as an interim regent since July 2023, where she has served as a proactive leader driving change within the Board of Regents. Ms. Akitake's leadership has brought a fresh perspective to the Board of Regents, where she implemented a collaborative approach to addressing pressing university issues through transformation of the University's audit process. Presently, Ms. Akitake serves as chairperson of the Independent Audit Committee, which is responsible for exercising oversight of the University's external auditors and Office of Internal Audit. As chairperson, Ms. Akitake has been instrumental in raising concerns regarding the condition of student housing at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and the University of Hawaii at Hilo. Ms. Akitake commenced a two-track audit utilizing historical data and forward-looking opportunities for regents policy changes regarding student housing to provide improvements to student life while ensuring accountability of university administration. Further, Ms. Akitake's leadership has also incited change regarding outstanding audits of the Warrior Recreation Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Waikiki Aquarium to allow the Board of Regents an opportunity to explore other matters within the University of Hawaii System. Aligned with her collaborative leadership, Ms. Akitake has also encouraged other regents to offer audit topics that may improve the university community. Through Ms. Akitake's leadership, she aims to change the perception of



audits and audit topics and shift the negative connotation of corrective actions to promote opportunities for positive change.

According to Ms. Akitake at the public hearing on her nomination, she noted that the Board of Regents should strengthen accountability of the University of Hawaii President and administration. Noting that the University of Hawaii System has a responsibility to the State as the only system of public higher education, Ms. Akitake commented that the strength of the University of Hawaii System is reliant on the effective leadership of the University of Hawaii President and administration. Additionally, Ms. Akitake pledged to be an advocate and ardent supporter of change in regard to increased reports of sexual violence on University of Hawaii campuses. Ms. Akitake's interest in student housing is grounded in her legal background, and she is committed to prioritizing student health and safety on campus. Your Committee is confident that Ms. Akitake will be a valuable voice for the Board of Regents and an asset to the University of Hawaii community. Your Committee therefore recommends Lauren Akitake be appointed to the Board of Regents of the University of Hawaii based on her leadership, accountability, and proactivity to serve the University of Hawaii community.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Higher Education 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 Higher Education,


DONNA MERCADO KIM, Chair



