

February 27, 2024

**The Honorable Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura**

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 213

Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: Nomination to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Dear Senator Buenaventura,

My name is Ramon F. Ruiz, I am a retired U.S. Air Force disabled Veteran, from Kalihi, Hawai'i, and I am very honored for merely being nominated to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). I hope to be a part of the SRC because in other ways I am already doing similar work as an SRC member, I show this every day through my efforts of helping those disabled and those who are not, in getting employed; or have referred them to agencies that have complimented or have made better their daily lives.

As an identified Disabled Combat Veteran, I have learned that not all disabilities are visible. I have seen veterans troubled in receiving help from services identified for Veterans, they were afraid to be identified as disabled because they did not feel worthy, especially with the stigma that people imposed with the idea that you must be missing a body part. Our Veterans have served their Country, and they did their part, and we are not done with them, to me this is the rest of their benefits.

Today, I work for the State of Hawai'i, Department of Labor & Industrial Relations; almost 10 years ago, I began as a DVOP (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program) Specialist, who assisted our Veterans with SBE (Significant Barriers to Employment), ranging from homeless, disabled, previously incarcerated, and more. Since 2019, I have served as the LVER (Local Veterans Employment Representative) for the Hawaiian Islands. As a LVER, I now work with employers, developing employment relations that benefit our Hawai'i population while still focusing on our Veterans, by creating hiring events among the unemployed community. These hiring events are held at the Ke'ehi Lagoon Memorial where they honor our Veteran Community of Hawai'i; the most job seekers we've ever had attend was 600+, which came to see 28 employers with jobs for our Hawai'i's unemployed population, and this was memorable.

By attending the NCSRC (National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, Inc.)/CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation) Convention in Georgia, in Oct – Nov 2023, I have had the chance to learn more about the SRC and the Administrators' challenges, efforts and success stories from people nationwide, and I have seen the differences that I can make by incorporating what I am already doing. I have referred several friends and family members who have reached out to counselors of the DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) to be assessed and assisted in employment; it is very rewarding.

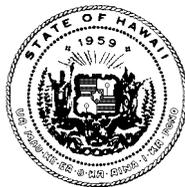
The qualities I offer are Hope, Opportunities, and Availability. Where job seekers seem to tire, I offer hope, where I see the possibilities within their situation, where I use experiences and techniques learned from others I've helped before them; I sincerely try to offer the opportunities that come through the new relationships that I've developed with employers. I am grateful for the position I am in, being a part of the SRC will give me a better perspective and tool to help our population of Hawai'i in their employment.

Respectfully,



Ramon F. Ruiz, LVER, USAF, Ret.

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February 26, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director  
Lea Dias, Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: **GM 562 – Relating to Consideration and Confirmation to the State Rehabilitation Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Ramon Ruiz, for a Term to Expire 06-30-2026.**

Hearing: February 28, 2024, 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconferencing, State Capitol

**DEPARTMENT'S POSITION:** The Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the nomination and confirmation of Mr. Ramon Ruiz to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

**PURPOSE:** The SRC was established by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The SRC works in partnership with the DHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on services that address the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Ruiz is seeking appointment to the SRC as a representative for Business, Industry, and Labor, per section 348-8(a)(5), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), as established under section 796d of 29 U.S. Code § 725, et seq. Mr. Ruiz is a veteran with a disability, thus satisfying the requirement of section 348-8(a)(10), HRS, that "a majority of the council members shall be persons who have disabilities and are not employed by the vocational rehabilitation division of the department."

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Mr. Ruiz is an Employment Service Specialist IV, Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) at the Department of Labor & Industrial Relations (DILR), Workforce Development Division (WDD), American Job Center (AJC). Mr. Ruiz's expertise and personal dedication to assisting veterans with disabilities would be an asset to advise DVR on its responsibility to assist persons with disabilities to achieve their employment outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Mr. Ruiz.