

STATE OF HAWAII
Executive Office on Early Learning
2759 South King Street, Room C6
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

April 5, 2024

TO: The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Education

FROM: Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director
Executive Office on Early Learning

SUBJECT: Measure: G.M. No. 715 – SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE EARLY LEARNING BOARD, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, JONI ONISHI, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 6-30-2028.
Hearing Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024
Time: 3:00 pm
Location: Conference Room 229

EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support

Aloha, I am Yuuko Arikawa-Cross, Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL supports the nomination and confirmation of Joni Onishi to the Early Learning Board (ELB).

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development and administration of the State's early learning system, which shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality early learning opportunities for children from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

The ELB was established as a governing board through Act 202, Session Laws of Hawai'i (SLH), Regular Session 2017, and is responsible for directing the EOEL on how best to meet the developmental and educational needs of children from prenatal care to entry into kindergarten; providing recommendations to the EOEL on improving the quality, availability, and coordination of early learning programs; promoting collaboration across agencies and stakeholders serving young children; and appointing and evaluating the EOEL director on an annual basis.

Executive Office on Early Learning
G.M. No. 715 – Relating to the Confirmation of
Joni Onishi to the Early Learning Board
April 5, 2024
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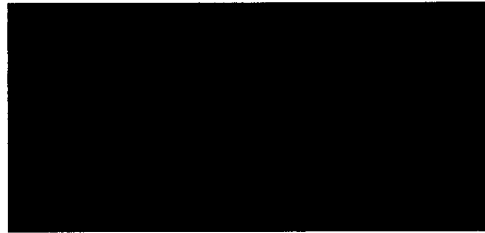
Ms. Onishi assumed emerita status as a professor at Hawai'i Community College and previously served as the Interim Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Hawai'i CC.

Ms. Onishi satisfies the requirements of HRS § 302L-1.65, which provides, that the ELB nominees shall demonstrate integrity, civic virtue, and high ethical standards and be willing to hold fellow members to the same; commit to being a conscientious and attentive board member; have an understanding of best practices in early learning governance or be willing to be trained in best practices in early learning governance; and have a clear understanding of the board's role in developing and protecting a clear, long-term strategic vision for early learning.

As demonstrated by her resume, Ms. Onishi served as a leader in the State's University of Hawai'i System. Her experiences indicate a valuable ability to function among diverse colleagues as a member of an effective team and provides substantial support of her deep and abiding interest in supporting families and children across Hawai'i and working to improve the community for the future.

Ms. Onishi's experience will add great value to the Early Learning Board. Thank you for your consideration of Ms. Onishi's nomination and for the opportunity to testify in support.

Joni Y. Onishi



Professional Preparation

University of Hawai'i at Manoa	MEd, 1982	Curriculum & Instruction
University of Hawai'i at Hilo	BBA, 1978	Business Administration

Appointments at Hawai'i Community College

Effective May 1, 2023	Professor Emerita
February 2013 to July 2021	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
January 2016 to June 2016	Interim Chancellor
July 2010 to January 2013	Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
December 2007 to June 2010	Interim Dean for Career and Technical Education
July 2001 to December 2007	Professor, CC
July 1997 to June 2001	Associate Professor, CC
July 1993 to June 1997	Assistant Professor, CC
January 1988 to June 1993	Instructor

Significant Campus Leadership and Accomplishments

Interim Chancellor

- Worked with administrators to be as transparent as possible with open communication to constituents.
- Made decisions to benefit the college and ultimately the students.
- Celebrated 75th Anniversary.
- Palamanui Campus opened with a blessing, Grand Opening and Open House.
- Managed the budget, performing a balancing act of controlling spending while meeting campus and student needs.
- UH Foundations Office was new to Hawai'iCC
 - Started Ambassador Program.
 - Hosted a kick-off reception and luncheons with key people and organizations -- business people, alumni, retirees, friends.
- Dealt with several grievances.
- Established a task force to develop a comprehensive Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP).
- Established a campus-wide task force to review the Hawai'iCC Institutional Learning Outcomes, Mission and Vision.

- Submitted Follow-Up Report to ACCJC to address deficiency cited in the Midterm Report.
- Submitted Selective Substantive Change Proposal to ACCJC for the relocation of the University of Hawai`i Center, West Hawai`i to a new campus site. This was followed by a campus site visit.

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

- Duties and responsibilities centered around Hawai`i Community College's (HawCC) commitment to providing excellence in teaching and learning.
- Provided support in the areas of curriculum and program development, distance education, institutional effectiveness including assessment and program/unit reviews, academic reporting, accreditation, scheduling of classes, publication of college catalog, articulation agreements with four-year and high schools, and faculty/staff collective bargain issues.
- In collaboration with Deans, Division Chairs, and staff managed the instructional budget.
- Monitored the establishment and revisions of policies and guidelines;
- Collaboratively worked towards meeting the University of Hawai`i's Performance Based Outcomes funding targeting student success – 1) increasing graduation numbers; 2) increasing student transfer from 2- to 4-year campuses, 3) increasing number of Native Hawaiian graduates, 4) increasing number of STEM graduates, 5) increasing number of PELL recipients.
- Responsibilities focused on providing leadership and direction to:
 - Assessment Coordinator and Committee (AC) in establishing procedures to assess student learning outcomes at the course, program/unit, and college levels;
 - Academic Support Units – Academic Computing Unit, Media, Institutional Research, Institutional Programming, BANNER, Quali Curriculum, Library, Learning Center, Instructional Technology Support, Pathway, Student Success – in providing the necessary services that are effective, efficient, and of high quality;
 - College to provide continuous improvement for program/unit review;
 - Division/Department Chairpersons on instructional, personnel, and budgetary matters;
 - Grant writing and custodian of grants;
 - Staff Development Coordinator and committee to carry out personal and professional development activities for faculty and staff;
 - AVID implementation of AVID strategies and course redesign and ways to enhance utilization of AVID tools;
 - College Effectiveness Review Committee (CERC) to review Comprehensive Program/Unit Reviews and make recommendations to the Chancellor on campus planning, budget priorities, and the comprehensive program/unit review process;
 - High Priorities Task Force to implement priorities set by the System – First Year Success, Academic Pathways/Transfer Pathways, Returning/Working Adults, Online Distance Education;

- Implement System initiatives -- Achieving the Dream (ATD), Complete College America (CCA), 15 to Finish, Integrated Student Support, Developmental Education, Math and English in the first year, Dual Credit, STAR GPS/Balance/Connect/Onboarding, First Year Experience, AA Exploratories, Pathways, Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), WICHE Passport, "Reposition" the UH for state needs during the Pandemic;
- Coordinated the transition to completely online during the Pandemic.

Interim Dean for Career and Technical Education (CTE)

- Worked closely with the division/department chairs of five divisions/departments.
- Provided leadership for personnel matters – recruitment, hiring, and evaluation of faculty and staff.
- Made recommendations regarding contract renewal, tenure and promotion.
- Provided leadership for instructional matters – development of new courses and academic programs; program reviews; assessment plans.
- Intervened to resolve student and faculty complaints
- Facilitated Perkins grant development.

Contributions to the University of Hawai`i Community College System

- WO Learning Champion, 1st Generation
- EXCELL, Educators X[Cross-System] Committee for Enhancement and Lifelong Learning
- Minimum Qualification (MQ) review task force
- Teaching Equivalencies task force
- Articulation Coordinators Committee
- Time to Degree task force

Contributions to the Community (current)

Crime Stoppers, Board member

Hawaii Economic Opportunity Council, Board member

Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin, Board of Trustees

YWCA Nomination Committee, member

Awards

- University of Hawai`i's nominee for the 2018 Governor's Award for Manager of the Year
- Chancellor's A`ali`i Award, 2010, 2021. This award is given to an employee who serves the college in an exemplary fashion, with grace and effectiveness despite many challenges and obstacles.
- University of Hawai`i Board of Regents' Medal for Excellence in Teaching, 2004
- 1999 Award for Innovation, collaborative project involving KTA SuperStores, the Accounting and Autobody Repair and Painting faculty and students, in recognition of significant innovation that positively impacts the education of students.

- Provost's Award for Outstanding Service, 1996, in recognition of significant contributions to the development of the college and for going "above and beyond" in offering time and talent to the college.

References

Susan Kazama, Interim Chancellor
Hawaii Community College



Robert Toyofuku, President
BT Consulting dba Advocates



Jessica Yamamoto
Interim Exec Assistant to the Chancellor
University of Hawaii at Hilo





April 7, 2024

Aloha Senators:

I fully endorse the nomination of Ms. Joni Onishi to the State of Hawai'i Early Learning Board.

Ms. Onishi's extensive experience in education and dedication to education make her an excellent candidate for this role. I had the privilege of first meeting Ms. Onishi when she was my keyboarding teacher in high school, and her qualities as an exceptional educator and mentor were evident even then. Over the years, Ms. Onishi has consistently demonstrated strong leadership, management skills, and a genuine commitment to supporting and encouraging those around her.

At Hawai'i Community College, I worked with Ms. Onishi as she served in many leadership roles including Interim Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, and Interim Dean of Career and Technical Education. If appointed, Ms. Onishi will bring these experiences to the board as she helps strengthen the learning environment for our youth.

As an administrator, Ms. Onishi has shown exceptional management abilities as well as in fostering a cooperative and cohesive team. Furthermore, Ms. Onishi's strong network of connections gives her access to resources to support board initiatives. Her passion for improving educational outcomes and her track record of success make her a standout candidate for the Early Learning Board.

I urge you to approve Ms. Onishi's nomination. She can make a significant and positive impact in advancing early learning initiatives in our state.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne R. Chung".

Anne R. Chung
Interim Dean, Career and Technical Education

GM-715

Submitted on: 4/5/2024 4:06:29 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/10/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Fukumitsu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 5, 2024

Re: Appointment of Joni Onishi to the Early Learning Board

Aloha Senators,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit this letter of support for Joni Onishi's candidacy for appointment to the Early Learning Board. As the former Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Hawai'i Community College and Professor Emerita, I have had the privilege of working closely with Mrs. Onishi on multiple college and community initiatives over the past 7 years. I can attest to her exceptional dedication, expertise, and passion for early childhood education and development.

Joni's commitment to access and equity in education spans decades, making her an exemplary candidate for the Early Learning Board State Committee. Her extensive experience in advocating for marginalized communities, coupled with her unwavering dedication to ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed, sets her apart as a leader in the field.

Throughout her career, Joni has been instrumental in driving systemic change and fostering collaboration among stakeholders at both the state and local levels. Her ability to engage diverse perspectives, build consensus, and develop strategic initiatives has led to tangible improvements in educational outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Moreover, Joni's deep understanding of the unique needs and challenges facing children and families from underserved communities makes her an invaluable asset to the Early Learning Board. Her commitment to equity and inclusion ensures that the voices of marginalized populations are heard and prioritized in decision-making processes.

In addition to her professional achievements, Joni's personal qualities of empathy, compassion, and integrity make her a trusted and respected leader. I wholeheartedly support Joni's nomination to the Early Learning Board State Committee. Her wealth of experience, unwavering commitment to equity in education, and proven leadership make her an invaluable asset to the committee.

Thank you for considering Joni Onishi's appointment, and I urge you to give her candidacy your full support. Should you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mahalo,

Lisa Fukumitsu

Student Success Coordinator, Assistant Professor

Hawai'i Community College, Academic Affairs
1175 Manono Street

Hilo, HI 96720-5096

(808) 934-2535

GM-715

Submitted on: 4/6/2024 10:09:10 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/10/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leanne Urasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee,

It is my honor to support the nomination of Joni Onishi to the Early Learning Board. I worked with Joni for over 10 years at Hawai'i Community College, I have had the privilege of witnessing her dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment to education firsthand.

Ms. Onishi's extensive tenure at Hawai'i CC, spanning over three decades, speaks volumes about her passion for fostering academic excellence and lifelong learning. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated exceptional leadership in various capacities, including her roles as a tenured faculty member in business education, interim dean for career and technical education, and vice chancellor for academic affairs.

Ms. Onishi's background in teaching and education, coupled with her extensive administrative experience, uniquely positions her to contribute meaningfully to the Early Learning Board's mission. Her insights and perspective will undoubtedly enrich the board's discussions and decision-making processes, ultimately benefiting children's academic and lifelong well-being across the state of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

Leanne Urasaki
Associate Professor
Hawai'i Community College

GM-715

Submitted on: 4/8/2024 8:42:08 PM

Testimony for EDU on 4/10/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michele Ebersole	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 7, 2024

Dear President Kouchi and Members of the Senate,

It is with great honor that I write this letter in strong support for Joni Onishi to the State of Hawai'i Early Learning Board. I have known her for over 30 years and had the privilege of working with her while she was the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Hawai'i Community College. I have witnessed her outstanding leadership, integrity, and dedication to serving the community.

Joni has been an educator in Hawai'i for many years and has a deep understanding of the P-20 education system. She is a tireless advocate and experienced educator who has the requisite knowledge, skills, and commitment to establish key initiatives and pathways to successfully increase accessibility for early education programs in Hawai'i. Additionally, her focus on empowering parents through education is a proactive and solution oriented approach. More qualified early educators and staff are needed and I strongly believe that Joni is exceptionally well-suited for this role. Her vision and ability to work with different stakeholder groups will be invaluable to the State of Hawai'i Early Learning Board.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse Joni Onishi for this appointment to the State of Hawai'i Early Learning Board. Improving early education and learning is of utmost importance to Hawai'i's future. Joni has innovative ideas, the expertise, dedication, and leadership qualities to greatly benefit our state and continue moving early education in Hawai'i forward.

Sincerely,

Michele Ebersole, PhD

Professor

School of Education

University of Hawai'i at Hilo

LATE

GM-715

Submitted on: 4/10/2024 8:03:14 AM

Testimony for EDU on 4/10/2024 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aina Akamu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha kakou,

I have worked with Joni Onishi on several initiatives that benefitted Ka‘ū High School students while she was the VC Academic Affairs for Hawai‘i Community College. After her retirement, she continued to support Ka‘ū High School by volunteering her time to serve on our Advisory Board, and develop our MOAs to support early college and dual credit initiatives. One initiative was the Hawai‘i Early Learning Pathways program, which allowed our high school students to take early college courses in Early Childhood Education, leading to a Child Development Associate certification, allowing program graduates to become Educational Assistants in the Department of Education after high school graduation.

Joni has been a patient, thoughtful, and committed volunteer that has helped to provide opportunities for our underserved student population in Ka‘ū. I fully support her confirmation.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a,

Aina Akamu

Academic Officer, Ka‘ū High & Pāhala Elementary School