

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/21/2024 9:54:07 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Travis Hong	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Travis Hong, MD

Manoa, Hawaii

Email: travhong@hawaii.edu

April 21, 2024

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

c/o Chair Karl Rhoads

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I submit this written testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Michelle N. Comeau to the position of District Judge of the First Circuit.

I have known Judge Comeau for more than 30 years both on a personal and professional basis. She possesses an exceptional moral compass, demonstrated on innumerable occasions a strong code of ethics, and has the effortless ability to analyze situations in a logical and fair manner. She has a collegial personality which allows her to work effectively with a variety of people across the full spectrum of backgrounds.

Judge Comeau's commitment to the betterment of this State is clearly evident in her everyday actions, and well as her personal work in the community. She would be an outstanding representative for Hawaii's judiciary and would be the rare person to elevate those around her.

Judge Comeau has my wholehearted support for confirmation, and I implore the committee to confirm her.

Sincerely,

/s/ Travis Hong

Travis Hong, MD

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/21/2024 9:54:17 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Eileen C. Zorc	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Eileen C. Zorc, Esq.

Email: eczorc@gmail.com

April 21, 2024

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

c/o Chair Karl Rhoads

Re: JC26, Nomination of Michelle N. Comeau, District Court, First Circuit

Dear Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am a Hawaii attorney and am writing in strong support of confirmation of Michelle Comeau for District Judge of the First Circuit. I have known Michelle for over 20 years. She is a trusted attorney, caring church member, and diligent non-profit board member for an organization called RYSE to help houseless teens.

Michelle has participated in the vestry of St. Clement's church and helped the selection committee in multiple rounds of selection of a new reverend to lead the church. As a church member, I knew I could rely on her model listening skills, resilience, level-headedness, and sound judgment to aid in a thoughtful, thorough process to reach a good decision.

For public service, aside from her RYSE role, she has helped teach and lead young children at church and in the Girl Scouts.

In sum, Michelle is one of the most insightful, kind, observant people that I know. She studies situations and cases carefully, but does not let her keen evaluation of things prevent her from making a timely, sound decision or taking needed action.

I urge the committee to confirm Judge Comeau.

Sincerely,

/s/ Eileen C. Zorc

April 21, 2024

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: JC 26 (Nomination of Michelle N. Comeau)

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Michelle Comeau's nomination to the District Court of the First Circuit. Judge Comeau presided as a per diem judge over several cases where I appeared as a deputy prosecutor in the district court. She is exceptional for her fairness to litigants and conscientious application of the law. She treats all parties with patience, dignity, and courtesy. Many new attorneys begin practicing in the district court, and lasting impressions of the judiciary often form here. Judge Comeau represents the very best of the Hawai'i bar and an excellent choice for elevation to the bench.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

/s/ Daniel Hugo

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/21/2024 12:49:50 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Celeste M. Gonsalves	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I support Michelle N. Comeau's, respectfully addressed as Judge Comeau, confirmation as a fulltime District Court Judge with a Caveat or Reservations. I will provide in-person Testimony and plan on staying to answer possible questions the panel may want to address.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my insights and experience with the Senate Panel.

April 20, 2024

To: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
State of Hawaii
State Capitol
Honolulu, HI. 96813

From: William M. Domingo (District Court Judge Retired)
2455 Waolani Avenue
Honolulu, HI. 96817

Re: Letter in Support of Michelle Comeau
District Court Judge, First Circuit

Dear Senator Rhoads and members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of Michelle Comeau, Chief Justice Mark Recktenwald's nominee to the District Court of the First Circuit. I have known Michelle since she became a District Court per diem judge in 2016. During her tenure as a per diem judge she has proven to be a great asset to the District Court bench. She has been able to handle all calendars assigned with competence, compassion and courage. Michelle is a great team player and never complains about her assignments or cases.

She will be a wonderful addition to the full-time District Court bench. Michelle has proven her abilities to perform at the highest level as a per diem judge. She is well-liked and respected by her colleagues and staff alike. If confirmed she will be able to hit the ground running and immediately contribute to the efficiency and daily workings of the District Court. I support her nomination without any reservations and can't think of a more fitting person to fill my position.

Mahalo for this opportunity to speak on behalf of Michelle Comeau. Please contact me at (808) 256-4669 should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

/s/ William M. Domingo

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/18/2024 9:38:20 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jared Watumull	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Michelle Comeau for the position as a full time judge in the District Court of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege of knowing Michelle for the last 4 years and can attest to her exceptional character, legal acumen, and unwavering commitment to justice. We met serving on the board for Residential Youth Services and Empowerment (RYSE) and I know she will serve us all well on the bench.

1. **Character and Integrity:** Michelle possesses impeccable moral compass and consistently demonstrates integrity in all her actions. She handles difficult situations with grace and fairness, making her an ideal candidate for a judicial role.
2. **Legal Knowledge and Experience:** Michelle has an impressive legal background. She has participated in numerous cases and rulings, showcasing her deep understanding of the law as both a lawyer and as a per diem judge. Her legal expertise and dedication to upholding justice make her an asset to any court system.
3. **Temperament and Communication Skills:** Michelle exhibits a calm temperament, even in high-pressure situations. Her ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, litigants, and other stakeholders is commendable. She approaches each case with thoughtfulness and impartiality. She showed these skills off to me first hand while she was leading RYSE out of the pandemic.

In summary, Michelle would be an outstanding judge, and I wholeheartedly recommend her for this esteemed position.

Sincerely,

Jared Watumull



Testimony of the
HAWAII STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
relating to the nomination of

Michelle N. Comeau
District Court Judge of the First Circuit (JC26)

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice-Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Jesse K. Souki
President, Hawaii State Bar Association

Hearing: Monday, April 22, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference
State Capitol

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA) Board of Directors' comments on Judge Michelle N. Comeau's nomination for District Court Judge of the First Circuit.

After a rigorous process, described below, the HSBA Board of Directors concluded that Judge Comeau is **QUALIFIED**. Judge Comeau has served as a per diem judge for over six years, and there was no negative feedback from members regarding her service on the bench. Her judicial colleagues and colleagues in her previous private practice highly recommended her in all categories of the HSBA criteria listed below.

The HSBA Board of Directors followed its multi-step process to arrive at its conclusion, which included:

- The nominee was notified of the HSBA appointment review process, which includes a questionnaire requesting educational credentials, legal and other professional work experiences, and personal references; a resume; a copy of the Judicial Selection Commission (JSC) application; a form authorizing disclosure from the Office of Disciplinary Counsel of any disciplinary action; and an interview with the HSBA Board of Directors.
- The HSBA membership received an electronic notification of the appointment and a request for comments on the nominee.
- A neutral fact-finding body comprised of three HSBA Board members was called upon to review documentation submitted by the nominee, contact references submitted by the nominee, review comments received from the HSBA membership, conduct follow-up for clarification, if necessary, and prepare a report for the HSBA Board.

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- Documentation submitted by Judge Comeau was reviewed, and the references listed were contacted for their personal opinions and observations. The comments and letters received from HSBA members reflected an affirmation of Judge Comeau in all categories of the HSBA criteria, which include Integrity, Diligence, Legal knowledge and ability, Professional experience, Temperament, Financial responsibility, Public service, and Ability to fulfill the responsibilities and duties of the position.
- The Interim Executive Director and I met with Judge Comeau on April 9, 2024, to discuss the subcommittee's findings.
- On April 10, 2024, the HSBA Board of Directors interviewed Judge Comeau in an executive session.
- The HSBA Board deliberated and voted that Judge Comeau was qualified.

Thank you for your time and attention.

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/18/2024 5:59:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Corianne Lau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee,

I write in support of Michelle Comeau’s appointment to the District Court of the First Circuit. I have known Michelle for about 12 years and consider her a friend as well as a former colleague. She worked for my law firm for five years, when it was Alston, Hunt Floyd & Ing (AHFI) before it became Dentons US LLP. We were sorry to see her leave in 2017. I’ve stayed in touch with Michelle since then, and have followed her career. She has balanced her private law firm work with service as a per diem judge very well, gaining much legal and practical experience that will assist her in a career as a full time judge.

During the time she worked on cases with me at AHFI, I found Michelle to be intelligent, responsible and trustworthy. She was (and is) a talented litigator who is a strategic thinker and a team player. She took the initiative on legal matters and was very diligent in her practice. She knows how to juggle a large load and is a great multitasker.

Michelle has now acquired much experience and many skills as a judge, having served as a per diem judge for over six years. She has excellent judicial temperament. She is compassionate but can be firm, decisive and take tough stances when needed.

Michelle would be a great addition to the Judiciary as a full time judge. I support her without reservation, and urge you to confirm her appointment to the District Court of the First Circuit. Thank you,

Corianne Lau

Dianne Winter Brookins, Esq.
44-304 Olina St. Apt. 1
Kaneohe, HI 86744

April 19, 2024

Senator Karl Rhodes, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: Testimony in Support of Measure JC 26: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee, MICHELLE N. COMEAU, for a term to expire in 6 years.

Dear Senators Rhodes and Gabbard:

I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of the nomination of Michelle N. Comeau to the District Court of the First Circuit.

Until my retirement effective February 29, 2024, I was a partner at Dentons US LLP (fka Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing), but I write in my personal capacity in support of Ms. Comeau. I have known Ms. Comeau since she joined the firm in May 2012. We have stayed in touch since her departure in October 2017, and I have followed her career with interest.

While employed by our firm, Ms. Comeau was an instrumental part of our litigation team. She worked on a wide variety of cases, from commercial disputes to pro bono civil rights cases. Even more significantly for Ms. Comeau's nomination to serve as a Judge in the District Court, she worked with a wide variety of partners—with a wide variety of personalities, interaction styles, and demands of associates. Ms. Comeau managed all those personalities with grace and good humor, qualities that will suit her well in dealing with the parties and counsel she will encounter from the bench. Indeed, I am sure they have already served her well as a Per Diem District Court Judge in the First Circuit.

Ms. Comeau has served as a Per Diem District Court Judge since 2017. During that tenure, she has adjudicated misdemeanors, petty misdemeanors, criminal violations, restraining orders, summary possession, and limited jurisdiction civil claims.

As already noted, Ms. Comeau's temperament and demeanor make her an ideal choice for the District Court bench. She does not become flustered or stressed, even when dealing with the most difficult of personalities. Ms. Comeau genuinely loves people and has a heart for service. She is practical and solution-oriented, and will excel at resolving disputes in a manner acceptable to all parties within the relevant legal framework.

I support the nomination of Ms. Comeau to serve on the District Court of the First Circuit enthusiastically, and without reservation. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony

Sincerely



Dianne Winter Brookins

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/21/2024 4:33:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Douglas Rigg	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As someone who has known Michelle Comeau for the past seven years, we are delighted to recommend her for the position of Judicial Nominee for the District Court of the First Circuit, representing the island of O‘ahu. Since meeting her seven years ago, we have had the pleasure of witnessing firsthand Michelle's outstanding qualities and contributions to both our community and our daughters' lives.

As the founding troop leader of our daughters’ Girl Scout troop, Michelle has dedicated her time and energy to creating a nurturing and empowering environment for the girls to thrive. Her leadership, dependability, and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in shaping the experiences of the girls and fostering their personal growth.

Moreover, Michelle's involvement in our church community has been equally impactful. She has been an active volunteer on the vestry, a dedicated Sunday school teacher, and a valuable member of the search committee for a new pastor. Her leadership, integrity, and selfless dedication have left a lasting impression on our congregation, inspiring others to follow her example of service and compassion.

In all three of these areas—Girl Scouts, church community, and our personal lives—we have witnessed Michelle's exceptional qualities of leadership, dependability, loyalty, and generosity. She consistently goes above and beyond to give of herself and her family to support those around her, making her a true model citizen and one of the finest individuals we have had the pleasure of knowing.

We wholeheartedly endorse Michelle Comeau for the position of Judicial Nominee and are confident that she will excel in this role. If you require any further information or would like to discuss her qualifications in more detail, please feel free to contact us.

Thank you for considering Michelle Comeau for this prestigious opportunity.

Warm regards,

Doug Rigg and Bill Markevitch

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: JC 26 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee, MICHELLE N. COMEAU, for a term to expire in 6 years

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to support Michelle N. Comeau's confirmation to the District Court of the First Circuit. Ms. Comeau's stellar qualifications speak for themselves; however, I wanted to highlight some of her intangible qualities that represent why she would make a successful judge.

Over the decades that I have known Ms. Comeau, I have known her to be fair, honest, and unyielding in her moral principles. Always a "straight shooter," she is one of few people that I trust to be impartial in any situation. Ms. Comeau is extremely dedicated and committed to her work, and she cares deeply about her community. Most importantly, however, I know that she would represent herself in the highest regard and treat others with the same humility and respect—day in and day out—regardless of the circumstance.

Mahalo nui for your consideration and the opportunity to provide my support.

Sincerely,
Daisy Chung

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/20/2024 4:04:05 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natalie Kim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit my ringing endorsement for Michelle Noelani Comeau to be appointed to the District Court of the First Circuit of Hawai'i. Michelle and I were co-clerks for the Honorable Susan Oki Mollway from 2010 to 2011. I witnessed first-hand Michelle's tremendous work ethic, her dedication to the fair administration of the law, and her zeal for justice and fairness. During our clerkship, Michelle was responsible for assisting with a major trial at the courthouse and loved digging through the facts, combing through expert testimony, and researching the nuance and history behind the applicable laws.

Since our clerkship, Michelle has expanded her experience through private practice, role as a part-time judge, and volunteer public service efforts all of which has prepared her to be the ideal candidate for this current role. I'm also honored to know Michelle as a friend, mother, and partner. She is a kind listener, loving mother, and loyal partner. Her actions outside the courtroom are a testament to her devotion to ethics and integrity. In the midst of difficult and tough situations, she carries herself with calmness, grace, and clear-headedness. I can think of no one better than Michelle to carry out the fair and just administration of the law and so do with principles, conscience, and care.

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee

Senator Rhoads and Committee Members:

It is a privilege and honor to submit this endorsement in support of the confirmation of Michelle N. Comeau, who has been nominated to serve as a Full Time Judge of the District Court of the First Circuit.

Ms. Comeau is my judicial colleague. I have known her for eight (8) years now, as a fellow per diem judge of the District Court of the First Circuit.

In my opinion, Judge Comeau is eminently qualified for this appointment. She is the consummate professional; hard working, diligent, well-prepared, and knowledgeable in all areas of the law which govern the demanding criminal, civil, restraining order, and summary possession calendars of the District Court. In her capacity as a per diem judge, she has been assigned to sit in all venues of the District Court, including Honolulu, Ewa, Pearl City, Wahiawa, and Waianae. She is very experienced.

She has served as a mentor to me, on many of my civil cases including small claims, restraining order and traffic (DUI) matters. Her intellect, legal background, experience, and scholarly achievements (graduating with the highest honors, and an "Order of the Coif" designation from UCLA) is belied by her Judicial Temperament, integrity and character. She is confident and decisive, but always courteous, patient, and respectful to all litigants (lawyers and self-represented) who appear before her. Her articulated decisions reflect her thoughtful, reasoned, fair and unbiased application of the law.

In short, Michelle N. Comeau, is an asset to the Judiciary. But her full-time appointment would serve to maintain the reputation of the Judiciary for delivery of high quality judicial performance.

Thank you for allowing me to speak to her appointment.

Ann S. Isobe

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: JC 26 – Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee, MICHELLE N. COMEAU, for a term to expire in 6 years

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

I was thrilled with the announcement of Michelle N. Comeau's assignment to the District Court of the First Circuit. She has been a dear friend for over 30 years and has always exemplified integrity, kindness, and honesty. I have admired her dedication to her family, her community, and her profession. Ms. Comeau's love for the law is palpable and her passion to help others is infectious. She is a worthy recipient of this honor and our state will benefit greatly from her wisdom and compassion.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my support.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey H. Chung, M.D.

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/21/2024 11:40:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jennifer Ontai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write to express my strong support for Michelle N. Comeau for the First Circuit Court judicial vacancy. I know Michelle both personally and professionally and have always found her to be intelligent, a hard worker, and a critical thinker. Michelle exhibits grace in the face of adversity and conducts herself with high integrity.

I trust that Michelle would be an excellent addition to the judiciary.

April 19, 2024

Distinguished Committee Members;

I write in support of Michelle N. Comeau's nomination to the District Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Ms. Comeau for over ten years. She and I have been on the Vestry (Parish Board) and we recently served together on the Priest-In-Charge Search Committee of the Parish.

Ms. Comeau's calming, peaceful presence and thoughtful attention to detail tempered by a strong sense of fairness and compassionate leadership in our faith community are examples of her qualities which would be invaluable on the bench.

I would even say, I have experienced Ms. Comeau exhibiting the Aloha Spirit as enacted in HRS § 5-7.5 of Akahai, Lokahi, Oluolu, Haahaa, Ahonui and "...in the contemplation and presence of the life force, "Aloha."

I would be happy to answer any questions from members of the Committee.

Sincerely,

Mary Carpenter

lualima25@gmail.com

JC-26

Submitted on: 4/22/2024 8:28:00 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2024 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dana Tokioka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong support for Michelle Comeau for the District Court of the First Circuit. I believe she will be an outstanding judge and will strengthen Hawai'i's community.

I have known Ms. Comeau for the past 6 years and feel blessed to count her as a friend. She is a smart, dedicated leader who supports Hawai'i and its diverse community.

Ms. Comeau is a fair and astute jurist. She not only has the legal acumen for the bench but, as a Kama'āina, she also understands Hawai'i's community. Ms. Comeau has been an attorney for over 18 years and has a great breadth of experience. She is intelligent, hard-working, and driven. Her work for the Ninth Circuit US Court of Appeals and the United States District Court of the District of Hawai'i exhibits her understanding of the judiciary, and her private practice experience has allowed her to work on a wide range of legal subjects.

Ms. Comeau is a leader who understands the importance of the judiciary in a tight-knit community. She leads by example and acts with integrity and intention in her interactions. She speaks honestly and consistently when discussing issues and problems with others and works to create understanding and respect for all.

For these reasons, I believe Ms. Comeau represents our community and should serve the State of Hawai'i as a judge in the District Court of the First Circuit.

Sincerely,

Dana Tokioka

