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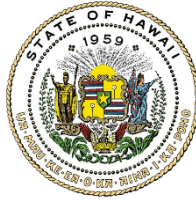
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April 21, 2025

**JC 30: Consideration and Confirmation to the District Family Court of
the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee, WILSON A. UNGA**

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Hayley Cheng, and I am the First Deputy at the Office of the Public Defender. I am writing in strong support of the judicial nomination of Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit Court.

I have known Mr. Unga professionally since 2011. Throughout the years, we have been opposing counsel numerous times - ranging from traffic and misdemeanor cases to the most serious felony level cases. Our careers have put us up against one another countless times including in jury trials. We have experienced victories and defeats against one another but no matter the outcome, Mr. Unga has always proven to be someone of the highest character. Despite the opposing and often adversarial nature of our jobs, I have never had a negative interaction with Mr. Unga. He is consistently prepared, fair, measured and compassionate, all while zealously representing the interests of the Prosecutor's Office and complainants. I have the utmost respect for him.

Mr. Unga possesses the qualities uniquely suited to succeed on the Family Court bench. He is always respectful and professional, puts people at ease, and will no doubt be able to navigate the emotional and often contentious cases before the Family Court. Mr. Unga has my strong support.

Hayley Cheng
First Deputy Public Defender



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Hale o nā Luna Makaʻāinana

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE CAPITOL
415 SOUTH BERETANIA STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

April 21, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawaiʻi State Senate
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: April 23, 2025, Testimony in Strong Support of Wilson A. Unga's Appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of JC30, the nomination of Mr. Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is a highly respected and dedicated public servant who has spent the better part of the past decade serving the people of the City and County of Honolulu as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. His leadership as Felony Trials Division Chief and as Team Captain of the Domestic Violence Felony Team has been instrumental in advancing justice for some of the most vulnerable members of our community. His work reflects not only his legal acumen but also his deep empathy and understanding of the complex challenges that families in crisis often face.

Beyond his prosecutorial work, Mr. Unga has contributed meaningfully to Hawaiʻi's legal and civic communities. His service on the Judicial Administration Committee, the Court Interpreters and Language Access Committee, and the Pacific Islander Legal Association Board demonstrates a clear commitment to equity, access, and inclusion within our judicial system. These experiences will serve him well on the bench, particularly in a Family Court context where cultural sensitivity and community trust are paramount.

Mr. Unga's extensive legal education and diverse professional background, which includes externships at both the Intermediate Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court of Hawaiʻi, reflect his well-rounded preparation for judicial service. His time mentoring youth and chairing the Lumanaʻi Scholarship also underscores his commitment to uplifting the next generation.

Mr. Unga has demonstrated a steady moral compass, an unshakable sense of fairness, and a genuine dedication to public service in every aspect of his career. I have every confidence that he will bring these same qualities to the bench and serve the people of Hawaiʻi with integrity and compassion.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate to confirm Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Quinlan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Honorable Sean Quinlan
Hawaii State Representative
House District 47 – Waiahole to Waialua

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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STEVEN S. ALM
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
LOIO HO'OPI'I



THOMAS J. BRADY
FIRST DEPUTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
HOPE MUA LOIO HO'OPI'I

**THE HONORABLE KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawai'i

April 23, 2025

RE: J.C. 30; JUDICIAL APPOINTEE WILSON A. UNGA

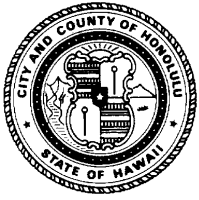
Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee, my name is Steve Alm, and the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney stands in **strong support** of Wilson Unga's appointment to be a District Family Court judge.

Wilson is a very smart and very personable guy. He has outstanding academic credentials, gained experience as a law clerk/extern in state and federal court, and has performed exceptionally well here at the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney. Wilson was the Domestic Violence Felony Team Captain when I took office in January of 2021 and I later promoted him to be the Division Chief for the Felony Prosecution Division. In spite of all these accomplishments, Wilson is humble and respectful.

He is part of a team from the Honolulu Prosecutor's Office who has been travelling to many elementary, middle, and high schools, primarily on the Westside to talk to the kids and encourage them to stay out of trouble and finish school. The team focuses on the high truancy kids as they are at the most risk to drop out and end up in Family Court. It is Wilson's passion for helping kids that leads me to think that while he would be a successful judge in any courthouse, he would be particularly well-suited to Family Court.

In addition to all of the above, Wilson is a fun, engaging guy who works well with others and makes his Division available to help other Divisions when they are short-handed.

While Wilson becoming a judge would be a real loss for this office, he would be a great addition to the Judiciary. For the foregoing reasons, I am in **strong support** of J.C. 30. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.



HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU
530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

MATT WEYER
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT II
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5002
FAX: (808) 768-1222
EMAIL: mweyer@honolulu.gov

April 21, 2025

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

RE: The Appointment of Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members,

I write in **strong support** of Wilson A. Unga's appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

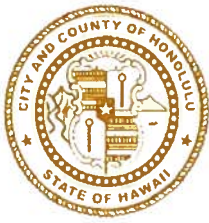
Having worked alongside Mr. Unga as a deputy prosecuting attorney, I have witnessed first-hand his passion for both the law and our community. His commitment to well-reasoned analysis would support fair outcomes, and his kindness and empathy would diffuse much of the tension that can appear in a courtroom setting. Mr. Unga's temperament and demeanor embody the qualities that I would want to see on the bench, qualities that would further the interests of justice while also helping to foster trust in the judiciary and judicial processes.

The First Circuit would be well-served by Mr. Unga's assignment to the bench. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support, and I ask you to consider and confirm his appointment.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Weyer", written over a horizontal line.

Matt Weyer
Councilmember, District 2
Honolulu City Council



HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL

KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU

530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

VAL AQUINO OKIMOTO
COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT VIII
(808) 768-5008
valokimoto@honolulu.gov

April 23, 2025

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

Testimony of Councilmember Val Aquino Okimoto

Support for Judiciary Communication No. 30 – Chief Justice’s Appointment Order No. 2025-3 – Wilson A. Unga – District Family Court of the First Circuit

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support** for Judiciary Communication No. 30. I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. Wilson A. Unga’s nomination to fill a District Family Court vacancy in the First Circuit. Wilson possesses the professional qualifications and personal character that make him exceptionally well-suited for this role. While his résumé clearly reflects his academic background and legal experience, it is his ability to balance a demanding career with deep commitments to family and community that truly sets him apart. His achievements have taken him far, yet his strong local roots have kept him grounded and service-oriented.

In the time I have known Wilson, I have come to know him as someone who is honest, hardworking, and grounded in strong convictions, while remaining fair and measured in all he does. He possesses the intelligence and legal acumen expected of a successful attorney, but what truly sets him apart is his quiet, humble confidence. He carries himself with a calm strength that commands respect without seeking attention. These qualities will serve him well as a judge and beyond. His dedication to upholding the Constitution and his commitment to public safety—demonstrated through his work as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney—make him exceptionally well-suited for the bench.

What many may not see or fully appreciate are Wilson’s selfless sacrifices in both his personal life and community service. He is a devoted husband and father to three daughters, consistently putting their needs above his own. Throughout his journey to gain the education and experience that have led him to this point, Wilson has sacrificed countless hours of personal time—never for recognition, and never with complaint, but always with his family’s well-being in mind. Beyond his home, he serves in various

leadership roles at local schools and within his church congregation. These commitments are entirely voluntary, done out of a genuine desire to uplift the keiki, kupuna, and families in his community.

Wilson has every opportunity to pursue a more lucrative path in private practice, but he chooses instead to dedicate his career to public service—with the clear goal of serving as a judge. This is not a fallback, but a calling rooted in his commitment to justice, fairness, and the well-being of the community. He believes deeply in the power of the judiciary to positively impact lives, particularly within the Family Court, where compassionate and thoughtful decisions are essential. His choice to remain in the public sector reflects his strong desire to contribute meaningfully to our legal system and to ensure it serves all people with integrity and equity.

For all these reasons—and many more not mentioned—I offer my full and unwavering support for the appointment of Mr. Wilson A. Unga to fill a District Family Court vacancy in the First Circuit. The City and County of Honolulu would be well served by his presence on the bench, and the people of O’ahu would benefit greatly from his experience, integrity, and commitment to justice. If given the opportunity, I am confident that this appointment would mark just the beginning of Wilson’s continued contributions to our legal system and to the broader community he so passionately serves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Val A. Okimoto". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Val Aquino Okimoto
Councilmember



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April 18, 2025

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am truly honored to unequivocally **support** the confirmation of **Mr. Wilson A. Unga**, a beloved son of Hawai'i and the Pacific, as a **Family Court Judge of the First Circuit**. There is no shortage of evidence that Wilson possesses the preparation, character, and caliber for this most important role and responsibility over decisions that will impact families and communities on a daily basis, especially during these times of uncertainty.

From growing up on the Northshore of O'ahu to his days at Georgetown University and University of Hawai'i-Manoa, I have witnessed Wilson's growth and maturity as an exceptional professional, community advocate, brilliant leader, and phenomenal human being. Evident on his professional pedigree, the impact of his contributions to the field and people in our communities across the state and beyond, are undisputable. Blessed with the responsibilities and privileges of his ancestral name, Wilson will embrace this judgeship as kuleana to people and place, local and beyond. Perhaps, most importantly, Wilson lives a life grounded in core values of integrity, competence, and commitment to healthy families and communities. His core values and unquestionable work ethic will serve as a strong foundation for this new journey and future contributions that he will make to the bench and most importantly, to families and communities in Hawai'i.

Again, I unequivocally support the confirmation of Mr. Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. Mahalo nunui for this opportunity to offer my support for a brilliant emerging leader.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Halaevalu', written over a horizontal line.

Halaevalu F.O. Vakalahi, PhD, MSW, MEd
President and CEO

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:36:00 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Fabiano	Testifying for Fia Care	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson Unga as my cousin for many years, and throughout our relationship, he has consistently demonstrated remarkable character, integrity, and dedication. Wilson has always exemplified compassion, fairness, and an unwavering commitment to justice, traits that I am confident will make him an exceptional Family Court Judge.

In both personal and professional interactions, Wilson consistently shows sound judgment, respect for all individuals, and a deep understanding of the profound impact family law decisions have on people's lives. His thoughtful demeanor, coupled with his extensive legal experience and genuine empathy for families navigating challenging circumstances, uniquely qualifies him for this important judicial role.

I wholeheartedly endorse Wilson Unga's confirmation and respectfully urge the committee to approve his appointment.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Stephen Fabiano

Uluave family
205 Church Street,
Onehunga Auckland, 1061
Aotearoa, New Zealand

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

We strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. As a family we unequivocally commend Wilson Unga.

It is a pleasure and an utmost privilege to be writing a letter of support to the character of the honourable Wilson Unga. This is a collective letter of support written by his family. Mr. Unga is a man of integrity and dedication. We have witnessed Mr. Unga, our cousin, uncle and nephew serve our family with such courage and humility. Most recently, Wilson has travelled to Aotearoa, New Zealand to commemorate and celebrate the 90th birthday milestone of his grandmother Hingano Finau. Wilson had shared an impeccable speech acknowledging the history and hard work of his grandmother which has been passed onto his mother Fifita Unga and now himself as a highly respected member of our family.

We know Wilson has the potential and exceptional skills to fulfil the role and do it well. We know this because in every family gathering, Wilson Unga embodies leadership qualities that our younger generation look up to. Wilson is a man of confidence yet humble and down to Earth. Wilson is a family man who shows commitment and strong work ethic. He makes meaningful contributions everywhere he goes and will no doubt be an invaluable contribution to the District Courts. With his strong authentic relational and interpersonal skills, we can attest that he is the right person for this role. We wholeheartedly recommend Wilson Unga.

Yours sincerely,

Maile Uluave, Aunty

Masters of Applied Practice – Social Practice (MAP-SP)

Jasper Uluave Elia, Cousin

Bachelor of Art – Conflict Resolution (BA)

O’Love Uluave, Cousin

Bachelor of Theology (BTheol)

Jatima Uluave, Cousin

Bachelor Art – Psychology (BA)

LATE

Testimony of
MUFU HANNEMANN

President & CEO, Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

Founder & President, Pacific Century Fellows

Former Mayor, City & County of Honolulu

April 23, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary

JC30: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee, WILSON A. UNGA, for a term to expire in 6 years.

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the committee:

I am pleased to submit this testimony in **strong support** of Wilson A. Unga's confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I first met Wilson when I presented him with a Lumana'i scholarship as a result of his outstanding achievement as a scholar-athlete of Samoan ancestry at Kahuku High School. I knew at that point that he was destined for greater things and kept abreast of his educational journey. I was pleased when the Pacific Century Fellows selection committee chose him after a rigorous evaluation process to be part of that year's cohort. That's how I really got to know him as a result of the class's many activities during the year and since. He has never failed to impress me with his demeanor, knowledge, strong but unassuming leadership among his peers, creative and decisive thinking, and commitment to the Fellows' program and to making Hawai'i a better place to live and work.

He was a stellar Fellow whose quiet but firm, decisive leadership was a noteworthy addition to a group of equally stellar executives and community leaders. He has never failed to comport himself with utmost courtesy and a willingness to create an environment of collaboration, with an emphasis on hearing the views of others, seeking common ground, and crafting solutions that are acceptable to the larger group, as he demonstrated consistently during his time with the Fellows. I have no doubt that the respect he holds for others, his sincere desire to be fair and reasonable in his dealings, and his ability to seek compromises for the greater good would hold him in good stead if selected for the bench.

Wilson Unga's legal and judicial skills are self-evident, given his considerable experience as a prosecuting attorney with the City, his clerkships, and his professional activities. Moreover, his character and qualities as an individual who is committed to helping those in need from all segments of society have been manifested time and time again when you see the myriad activities he supports in assisting North Shore residents. His exceptional community and professional service, his sacrifice and willingness to serve for two years on a church mission in Japan, his professionalism as a member of the bar,

and his record as a prosecutor combine to reflect an exceptional individual who is a credit to our community and to the legal system.

There can be no question or doubt about the character and integrity of Mr. Unga. He also is of Samoan ancestry, and by his example embodies the qualities the Samoan community seeks in, and strives for, its people.

He would make an excellent member of the Judiciary and I urge you to give his nomination your favorable consideration.

Mahalo.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 2:40:47 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gil Riviere	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Committee Members.

I offer my **strong support** for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga to the District Court of the First Circuit.

Over the several years that I have known Wilson, I have observed his calm temperament, warmth and respect shown to others, and his love and devotion to his wife and children.

His resume is strong and everyone speaks highly of him. His excellent time management and interpersonal skills demonstrate how he will be an efficient, considerate, and fair judge in Family Court. Hawaii will be well served by Judge Unga.

I encourage you to confirm Wilson Unga.

Respectfully submitted,

Gil Riviere

Waialua

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 11:03:46 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Lau	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

To Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

For: Wilson Unga

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a family court judge of the First Circuit. My name is Michael Lau, I have been teaching High School Speech, Debate, and Drama for the last 17 years. I currently teach at Kahuku High and Intermediate School. I have known Wilson since we were young boys as neighbors, peers, and friends.

I am two years older than Wilson and when I was just beginning my teen years I often went over to his house to play games in their home. I distinctly remember playing a kind of soccer-like game on their porch. Even from such a young age Wilson has always been generous with his things, his ideas, and his time. I remember him adjudicating disagreements from even those childhood days.

As we went into high school we were both on the speech and debate team. He has often come back to volunteer and coach for my team that I coach now. I will never forget a state final debate he was judging along with four other judges and one of the debate teams got up and read the case for the wrong side. Their partner almost immediately started crying sitting next to her, and yet the student still did not realize their mistake until they had gotten through their entire first speech. The room was packed with observers, as it was a state final. Everyone was a little dumb struck and did not know how to proceed. Wilson quickly took charge and asked if it was ok by the other judges if they restarted the round and allowed the team to read the correct case. All the judges agreed. This experience truly highlights to me the kind of man Wilson is. He cares about fairness. He is compassionate when needed, and above all, capable.

A few years ago just as covid was winding down, one of our mutual high school teachers Ms. Lori Ishihara suddenly and tragically passed away. I remember both Wilson and I spoke at her remembrance at the school. His words struck me that day. He remembers his mentors and each person who has helped him along his journey.

In recent years we have worked together in our church's leadership. We were both serving a congregation of college students who attend BYU-Hawai'i. As we served together we planned and executed activities, meals, and service for the young adults. Today he

continues to serve this same congregation as its primary leader and organizer. He sacrifices his time, talents, and abilities to everyone he comes in contact with.

These are just a few of the many experiences I have had the privilege to witness about this great man. I can give no greater support or recommendation to any individual I have ever encountered than to Wilson Unga. In difficult situations he will prevail and in favorable situations he will flourish. He is the kind of person you would want on your team, in your friend group, and as a member of your family. He is upstanding in every way and exemplary as a leader.

Feel free to contact me for further information:

(808) 381-1119 56-490 Kamehameha Hwy, Hawai'i 96731

mlau025@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael Lau

Kahuku High & Intermediate School

April 18, 2025

Hello, I'm writing to share with you my perspective as a support for Wilson A Unga as an appointee to the District Family Court Judge.

One of my favorite quotes comes from a Chinese Proverb that says,

“If there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world”.

This saying encompasses deep truth, that everything starts in the HOME. Because it is in the home where character is developed, where fundamental truth is taught, where happiness is sowed, where love is nourished, where kindness is fostered, where one can find a piece of heaven on earth; because it is in the home where FAMILY is rooted.

Mr. Unga grew up under the watchful care of his loving parents, where he was taught the golden rule of life, “do unto others as they do unto you”. This virtue has been Mr. Unga’s guiding principle in life. I have watched Mr. Unga grow up to be a man of great faith, a man of talent, a man of wisdom, a man of character but above all, he is a man of integrity. C.S. Lewis once said, “integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching” and that is Mr. Unga to the core.

Wilson Unga is a defender of justice, advocate for the voiceless and seeker of truth. He will fight for fairness, as he deliberates one case at a time. Because as the saying goes, justice is truth in action and as Martin Luther King said it so beautifully, “Without justice, there can be no peace”, for peace and justice are two sides of the same coin.
May God bless America and this great land of the brave where freedom rings from sea to shining sea.

I thank you in advance for your attention and ask that you consider this humble letter as a testament to Mr. Unga’s character qualifications to sit on the bench as a District Family Court Judge.

Sincerely,

Melenaite Uata

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 9:41:11 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Uata	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. He has been a great District Attorney. He is a great family man. He will rule fairly and in accordance with the laws and constitution.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:42:29 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Delsa Moe	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the State Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit in Hawai'i! I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson since his birth and have witnessed his remarkable growth and achievements throughout his life which I feel have adequately prepared him for this role.

Wilson has always exemplified the qualities of a true gentleman. He is respectful to all, yet firm in his convictions, demonstrating a balance that is essential for a judge. His humility in the face of his numerous accolades is commendable, and his quiet dedication to serving the community and his church speaks volumes about his character as illustrated in this personal example.

When my brother-in-law David was serving as the bishop for a church congregation of about 400 members in Kahuku, Wilson was one of his two counselors or assistants. When David fell terminally ill, Wilson faithfully visited him at home or at Straub, to receive instructions regarding the administration of the congregation and to report back to David on how things were going. My brother-in-law and my sister often expressed relief and gratitude for Wilson and the other counselor for being trustworthy in carrying out their additional duties so well during his extended illness to allow him to focus on his health needs. In addition to this, Wilson and his parents often brought in meals or did thoughtful and kind deeds for my sister and her husband all during his illness and throughout his funeral preparations and service. That's just the kind of person Wilson is because he values people and his commitments to them.

Integrity is a cornerstone of Wilson's life. He consistently demonstrates honesty and ethical behavior, earning the respect of those around him through his unwavering respect for others. He is not contentious but doesn't hesitate to share his opinions in a respectful way. His advocacy for education is evident in his role as the current president of the Lumana'i Scholarship Committee, where he inspires and awards high school seniors of Samoan ancestry, fostering their academic and personal growth.

Wilson's commitment to his family is equally impressive. Despite his demanding schedule, he never neglects his duties as a husband, father, or son. His ability to balance professional responsibilities with personal commitments is a testament to his exceptional time management and prioritization skills.

In conclusion, Wilson Unga possesses the qualities and experience that will make him an outstanding judge. His integrity, respect for others, ability to listen without hasty judgement, dedication to education, and commitment to family and community service are attributes that will serve him well in this role. I strongly support his appointment and believe he will be an asset to the District Court and District Family Court of the First Circuit in Hawai'i.

Mahalo,

Delsa Moe

Laie, HI 96762

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 7:06:32 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Matangi Taufahema	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Matangi Taufahema

666 Hoomalu Street

Pearl City, HI 96782

matangiammt@gmail.com

808-295-8743

April 22, 2025

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I have known Wilson all his life, and can attest to his exceptional integrity, unwavering work ethic, and deep commitment to fairness and justice.

Wilson has always carried himself with humility, wisdom, and compassion - qualities that are essential for any role within the judiciary, especially in family court where sensitivity and balanced judgment are paramount. He is a thoughtful listener and a principled decision-maker who approaches every situation with both logic and empathy.

Beyond his impressive legal knowledge and professional experience, Wilson has consistently shown a genuine concern for the well-being of families and children. His ability to remain impartial while still understanding the emotional complexities involved in family matters makes him exceptionally qualified for this role.

I have every confidence that Wilson will serve the court and our community with honor, integrity, and respect. He possesses the character and dedication required to uphold the values of justice in a way that reflects the highest standards of the legal system.

Thank you for considering his appointment.

Sincerely,

Matangi Taufahema, M.S.C.P.

April 22, 2025

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

Re: JC 30 (Nomination of Wilson A. Unga)

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

I strongly support Wilson Unga's nomination to serve as a district family court judge.

As a high school sophomore, I might have hesitated to acknowledge any other debater as a worthy competitor. But one Kahuku senior stood apart. Even then, Wilson Unga was exceptional. Not just clever and articulate, as many were, but also patient, generous, and dignified. He possessed that rare gift of remaining thoroughly likable, even when telling you that you were wrong.

What set Wilson apart, even as a teenager, was his commitment to the truth. He always gave the opposing argument a fair hearing before offering a thoughtful response. Winning was never the ultimate goal for him—but perhaps that's why he won so often. He also never made arguments personal. In an environment where high school debates could feel melodramatic, Wilson remained grounded. He approached every issue with seriousness and perspective. Advocacy, to him, was not a declaration of war: it was an exercise in reasoning and respect. His confidence in his research and preparation allowed him to always take the high road. And he did.

That impression stayed with me. Years later, as a first-year law student, I applied for an internship with the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney. As I left the interview, I ran into Wilson in the elevator. He remembered me, despite the years that had passed. I've never forgotten that moment either.

Today, I'm proud to count him as a colleague and a friend. In my seven years as a deputy at the office, I have seen Wilson's leadership during the most difficult period in the history of the Honolulu office. I trust his judgment and integrity completely.

Wilson has already been entrusted with life-or-death decisions. In the Career Criminal Unit, he pioneered enforcement strategies against some of Oahu's most prolific offenders. As Team Captain in the Felony Domestic Violence Unit, he handled volatile cases of intimate partner violence and child abuse. Now, as Division Chief of the Trials Division, he supervises all general felony attorneys and heads our Homicide Team.

Wilson is a seasoned trial lawyer with deep expertise in criminal law, evidence, and procedure. He is a quick study, unafraid to seek out knowledge where needed. And just as importantly, he has the humility to recognize what he does not know. He listens, genuinely and patiently, whether to younger deputies or opposing counsel.

Wilson has been a faithful steward of his considerable talents. Entrusted with much, he has accomplished much. While this nomination represents a significant loss to our office, it is a tremendous gain for the judiciary and for justice in Hawai'i.

Chief Justice Recktenwald chose wisely in nominating Wilson Unga. I am proud to offer my strongest support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

/s/ Daniel Hugo

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:54:57 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Uila Vendiola	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to offer my wholehearted and enthusiastic support for the confirmation of Mr. Wilson Unga as a judge in Hawai'i's Family Court.

As a proud Pacific Islander, Wilson embodies the values, culture, and diversity that make our islands so special. He is not only a reflection of the ethnic makeup of our community, but also a shining example of what it means to be a servant leader—grounded, compassionate, and committed to justice.

Born and raised on the North Shore, Wilson excelled as a scholar and community member from an early age. He participated in a wide range of extracurricular activities—sports, Speech and Debate, We the People, and concert choir—demonstrating a well-rounded dedication to personal growth and civic engagement. Though his academic journey took him to the mainland, Wilson chose to return to Hawai'i with the express purpose of giving back to his community through our justice system.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Wilson is a devoted husband, father, and son. He has also served as a realtor to support his family. On a personal note, I will always remember how he walked my husband and me through the process of purchasing and transferring ownership of my parents' home. His guidance during that emotional time was invaluable, and it speaks to his integrity, patience, and care for others.

You will not find a more suitable, qualified, or grounded candidate for this role. My family and I fully support Mr. Unga's candidacy without reservation. Please confirm him—our families, our courts, and our future will be better for it.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Warmest regards,

Uila Fotu Vendiola

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 4:35:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Kurisu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of Wilson Unga, a judicial nominee for the District and Family Courts of the First Circuit Court.

Wilson is a man of integrity and honesty and who has a deep commitment to the people and place of Hawaii. In all his work and his various community roles, he strives to make things better than he found them. In his professional career he has always sought to uphold the law and I have every confidence that he would bring the highest level of impartiality, thoughtful and thorough assessment, and sound judgement to his role as a judge in the First Circuit Court if given the opportunity. Not only is he capable and competent in his skills as an attorney, he also is a person of sound character and has served as a role-model for youth and peers alike. He is also kind-hearted and seeks to bring out the best in others around him, which would serve him well as continues to balance protecting the law, people, human rights, and our communities at large. Wilson's experience coupled with his character make him an ideal judicial nominee. He would be a respectable and fair judge and is without a doubt also respected in his craft and decision making.

It a deep honor to know Wilson and to see that he has the opportunity to expand his contributions to our community in ever more meaningful ways. I know that regardless of the outcome of this nomination, he will continue to do so with a heart and commitment that is second to none. He is the kind of person whom you can trust and can rely upon. It is with great pleasure that I lend my full support to his judicial nomination.

Respectfully,
Dawn Kurisu

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 6:16:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Kaohu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am honored to submit this written testimony in strong support of the nomination of Wilson A. Unga to the District Court of the First Circuit. As an individual who has had the privilege of working with Mr. Unga and observing his leadership and legal skills, I am confident that he will be an outstanding addition to the bench.

Wilson A. Unga is not only a dedicated attorney, but also a strong and inspirational community leader. His tireless commitment to public service has made a profound impact on the lives of those in our community. He possesses the rare combination of legal expertise, community awareness, and an unwavering commitment to fairness and justice. In his role as the Division Chief of the Felony Prosecution Division at the Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Mr. Unga has demonstrated exceptional leadership and an unwavering dedication to justice. Under his leadership, the division has thrived, and his ability to handle complex felony cases with integrity and precision is a testament to his deep legal knowledge. His work overseeing critical cases speaks to his keen understanding of the law, his ability to manage teams effectively, and his ability to make tough decisions in the pursuit of justice.

What truly distinguishes Wilson Unga, however, is his humility and work ethic. Despite his impressive achievements, he remains grounded, approachable, and always willing to help others. He leads with compassion, striving to serve others first and foremost. His humility and personable nature make him a trusted and respected figure in the legal community. Whether working with his colleagues, law enforcement, or community members, Mr. Unga always approaches his work with the utmost professionalism and respect.

In addition to his legal acumen and leadership abilities, Wilson Unga is an individual who embodies the values of fairness, dedication, and integrity. His passion for the law, his commitment to justice, and his ability to empathize with others make him uniquely qualified to serve as a judge. I have no doubt that he will approach every case with the same diligence, fairness, and compassion that have characterized his work throughout his legal career.

In conclusion, Wilson A. Unga is a highly qualified, experienced, and capable individual who would serve the District Court of the First Circuit with distinction. His strong community leadership, extensive legal knowledge, humility, hardworking nature, and personable demeanor

make him an outstanding nominee. I wholeheartedly support his confirmation and encourage the Senate Judiciary Committee to confirm him for this important judicial position.

Mele F. Pepa

10481 Crest Haven Court
South Jordan, UT 84095
thesanfts05@gmail.com
385.222.8289

April 16, 2025

To Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Mele Pepa. A resident of Utah, I am a student at the University of Utah studying Family, Community, and Human Development. I am writing to express my full support for my cousin, Wilson A. Unga, who has recently been appointed as a District Family Court Judge.

As someone who has known Wilson both personally and professionally for many years, I can speak to his integrity, compassion, and strong sense of justice. He is someone who leads with fairness, listens with empathy, and holds himself to the highest ethical standards. His commitment to serving families and the community makes him exceptionally well-suited for this important role. I've seen that as I've witnessed at a young age his achievements from the small town of Kahuku to prestigious Georgetown University and returning home to help the people that helped him.

I have witnessed Wilson's great achievements and his triumphs through the hardships of life . What a privilege it is for the state of Hawaii to have someone as such on the bench. Someone of such humble beginnings, great experiences and wisdom. Someone who was so influential on my siblings and me that we all carried on into higher education.

During my time here at the University of Utah I've learned of unfairness, and discrepancies that come from manmade systems. No system is perfect, but what a great way to make it better by adding someone such as Wilson A. Unga.

With mine own eyes from my childhood, through my adolescence, and my entire adulthood, I can say with confidence that Wilson has always approached life with humility, wisdom, and a deep respect for others. I have no doubt that these qualities will continue to guide him on the bench and make a meaningful impact on the families he serves.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
Mele Fatai Pepa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mele Fatai Pepa'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'M' and 'P'.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/16/2025 7:27:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alison Faleolo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ALOHA Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A .Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Though I know Wilson as a contributing member of our Kahuku community, I have the privilege of having his middle child in my 5th grade class this 2024 - 2025 school year. His child has excellent attendance, is a leader among peers, takes responsibility for learning, and is strongly supported by parents that encourage and show up.

It is common to see Wilson, his wife, his children, and extended family attending school events that celebrate his children (ie. Super Raider assemblies), that support the school (ie. Halloween Festival, School Fundraisers), and that encourage family time (ie. Sweetheart Luncheon).

This past weekend, Wilson and his family attended the Ko'olauloa Battle of the Books competition, where two of his children were participating. During part of the competition, his youngest child, was too afraid to participate in the last round. Seeing her being consoled by teammates, teachers, and even a sibling, he quietly came and sat by her. With his arm around her, he simply sat with her and supported her by being present.

That quiet, yet meaningful act of being present for those who need support, is just one example of who Wilson Unga is, and what Wilson Unga will do as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Mrs. Alison Faleolo

Kahuku Elementary School - 5th grade teacher

Imiloa Borland

From: Robin Maiava <rmaiava@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 8:17 AM
To: JDC Committee
Subject: Wilson A. 'Unga

You don't often get email from rmaiava@msn.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

April 17, 2025

To: Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: JC 30-Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. 'Unga for District Family Court Judge, First Circuit

From: Robin K Maiava

I am writing regarding my support for Wilson A. 'Unga. I have known Wilson personally since the day he was born. I am Wilson's aunt.

Wilson was raised in a loving home with a younger sister and wonderful parents that provided all the necessities and opportunities that they could offer him. Throughout the years Wilson has shown a strong commitment to his family, education and community.

One way that Wilson served his community was through the Boy Scouts program where he did multiple service projects as well as a community based Eagle project completing all requirements to earn the prestigious Eagle Scout award.

Some of the qualities that I appreciate about Wilson are that he has always been kind, compassionate, even tempered, honest and reliable. Wilson has always been very supportive of his family and friends. I can also vouch for Wilson's integrity. Throughout the years he has displayed integrity. I see that trait in the way he honors his parents, respects his sister and is raising happy and healthy children.

Lastly, I'd like to share an experience I had with Wilson on the day he married his wife, Sunny. I stood in the background as Wilson and Sunny made a very important decision in their lives, a commitment to each other. Wilson displayed all the characteristics that I've always known him to possess and was very pleased to see that Wilson was marrying a woman with similar attributes and traits.

I am in support of Wilson's confirmation. I know he will fully commit to this position.

I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Robin K. Maiava

April 17, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Rhodes and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

It is with the utmost pleasure that I write this letter of support on behalf of Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Wilson Unga. I have known Mr. Unga for almost four decades. We attended Kahuku Elementary, and graduated together from Kahuku High school in 2002. I am delighted to provide this testament to his leadership skills and character that will predict him an excellent fit as a judge for the District Court of the First Circuit and the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Forgive me, Chair Rhodes and members of the committee for the casualness but I would like to refer to Mr. Unga in this letter by his first name, Wilson, as it evokes many memories that will help me explain why I think he is the perfect person for the judgeship. When I heard the news last month that Wilson was a judicial nominee I was overjoyed, but not entirely surprised. If there is anyone who I know personally that is fit to become a judge, it would be Wilson. I believe that a judge must possess characteristics such as intelligence, integrity, compassion, and being well-versed.

Wilson's resume is decorated with examples of his intelligence. He led us as young men growing up in Kahuku by example, excelling in his classes, and being accepted to the Georgetown University. Wilson was a recipient of the Lumana'i Scholarship in 2002, one our community is proud of because he represented his Samoan roots in higher education. When he graduated from Georgetown, a few of us friends flew out to Washington D.C. because he represented us and our little town at a prestigious university. Reciprocity is instilled in this man; as a Chairman of the Lumana'i Scholarship Committee, he embodies the mantra, "give back to the community". Even with the intelligence he possesses, he is humble and serves his community with love.

A judge must be honest and transparent. Wilson is a man of integrity. He means what he says, and says what he means. I think this is at the core of Wilson's being, and why he is so respected in the community. He communicates honestly, and values relationships.

Wilson is well-versed. In high school he was involved in so many extra-curricular activities including our student body government, band, multiple clubs and events. A club he was

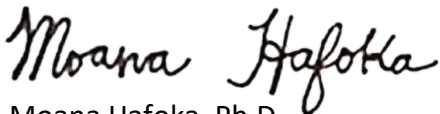
a part of was the Red Cross Club. I remember this particularly because he recruited me to a meeting and assisted in some of the club events and service projects in the community. One event in specific Wilson participated in was the Model UN. There weren't too many Pacific Islander boys participating, so this was a new experience for me and several other boys. At first it was intimidating, but Wilson was such a blessing because he was able to be a bridge for us and connect us with other people, explain to us the procedures, and make us feel welcome in this overwhelming event. I share with you these things, Judiciary Committee, because these activities and interests allow him to connect with so many people. It is rare for an individual to have the intelligence and experience to be a deputy prosecutor coupled with the interests and experience in surfing, running, cultural responsibilities and most importantly the ethics and temperament that Wilson possesses. He is a walking example of being well-versed.

As indicated in his resume, Wilson's knowledge and experience is remarkable as a nominee for the judgeship. You may have a rubric or formula in determining his experience in the courtroom, but I hope that I am able to highlight the person that he is beyond the courtroom. In his hometown, he still serves as a volunteer overseeing young single adults in our church, and in so many other capacities.

For these reasons, I know that Wilson Unga will be a wonderful asset as a judge in the First Circuit. He is productive, an active member of the community, and a dedicated learner, one our community and state can be proud of. Senate Judiciary Committee, I hope you will consider him in one of the judges in Hawai'i.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Mr. Wilson Unga as a judicial nominee, please do not hesitate to contact me at moana.hafoka@utahtech.edu or my cell: (808)227-4327.

Sincerely,



Moana Hafoka, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice
Department of Criminal Justice
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84790

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:42:14 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Viliani Piutau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my support for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is a highly qualified, dedicated, and compassionate legal professional who has demonstrated unwavering commitment to justice and public service throughout his career. His experience in family law, deep understanding of the challenges faced by Hawaii's families, and proven integrity make him exceptionally suited for this important role.

Mr. Unga is known for his humility, fairness, and deep respect for the people and communities he serves. He brings not only legal expertise but also cultural awareness and empathy - qualities that are critical in family court, where decisions often deeply impact the lives of children and families.

I am confident Mr. Unga will serve with the utmost professionalism and will uphold the values and responsibilities entrusted to our judiciary. His confirmation would be a meaningful step toward strengthening our courts and supporting families in the First Circuit.

Thank you for your consideration.

April 17, 2025

RE: JC 30-Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A Unga for Family District Court Judge

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

It is my sincere pleasure to recommend Wilson Unga for the position of District Family Court Judge.

I have known Wilson since he was a precocious child who always stood out from the crowd.

Notwithstanding his rare intelligence, what really sets him apart is his judgement and his warmth.

Wilson always sees the big picture and understands the importance of human relationships. I have never known Wilson to be an ideologue, but rather a genuine pragmatist.

In the considerable amount of time that I have spent in his company, I have never observed Wilson arguing with anyone. I have never seen him visibly angry, even when you knew he had to be upset. I have never heard him vent, hyperbolize, or criticize.

His arresting smile and warmth brighten the world for everyone who has the pleasure of his company.

As a judge he will undoubtedly exercise extraordinary insight, patience, and erudition in his competent and comprehensive application of the law.

He enjoys my wholehearted support and commendation.

Warmest Regards,

Cory Fabiano

Chief Technology Officer

Cúratús, LLC

5252 Edgewood Dr

Suite 165

Provo, UT 8460

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 11:08:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Viliami Fonokalafi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhodes and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga to the position of Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have had the privilege of growing up knowing Mr. Unga personally and have always been impressed by his integrity, empathy, and deep commitment to the community and family. Mr. Unga has always set the standard of what to achieve for in the fields of education and life for our relative family's. His grounded sense of fairness, legal acumen and understanding of the complex and sensitive issues that come before the Family Court make him exceptionally qualified for this role.

Mr. Unga's character and experience reflect the kind of judicial temperament that our community deserves—someone who is patient, thoughtful, and guided by both the law and compassion. He is deeply rooted in family values and the values of service and accountability, and he brings a unique multicultural and personal perspective that enhances his ability to understand and serve the diverse families of our state.

I am confident that Wilson Unga will serve the First Circuit with honor and distinction. I respectfully urge this committee to confirm his appointment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Viliani Pepa Fonokalafi

Nancy Kata
137 St Georges Rd
Avondale, Auckland 0600
nancyvkata@gmail.com
+64210651432
17 April 2025

Chair Rhoads and Members of
the Senate Judiciary Committee
Supreme Court of Hawaii
417 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: JC 30- Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. Unga for District
Family Court Judge, First Circuit**

Dear Chief Justice Recktenwald,

I am writing to express my strong support for Wilson Unga's nomination for a judicial appointment at the district and family courts. Wilson is a respected leader in our community, known for his unwavering dedication to helping others, fostering unity, and ensuring that those around him are supported in times of need.

As the Assistant President of our family community in New Zealand, Wilson has played a critical role in strengthening relationships and organizing efforts that benefit individuals and families. He is someone who leads by example, always willing to step up and contribute whenever there is a need. During his recent trip to New Zealand for a committee meeting, he personally delivered clothing and essential goods to members of the community, ensuring that families had the necessities to get by. His generosity also extended to securing a venue for our 2025 annual reunion, demonstrating his commitment to preserving and enhancing the bonds that unite us.

Wilson is a natural mediator and problem-solver. His ability to bring people together, navigate complex situations, and make fair and balanced decisions speaks to his strong moral character. His deep understanding of community values, combined with his ability to assess situations objectively, makes him exceptionally well-suited for a judicial position. I sincerely believe that Wilson would be an asset to the judiciary, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts on his character and contributions. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if any further information is needed.

Sincerely,
Nancy Kata
Grants Coordinator
West Ace Tigers Tongan Pickleball Club
+64210651432

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 3:32:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rodney Char	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Wilson Unga to the judicial office of District Court Family Judge, First Circuit, State of Hawai‘i. Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with Mr. Unga and have observed his exemplary professionalism and dedication.

In 2014, Mr. Unga served as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney while I was a courtroom bailiff in the O‘ahu District Courts. Mr. Unga consistently demonstrated efficiency, professionalism, and a thorough knowledge of the law. He managed his calendar effectively, even on the busiest days, and was always well-organized and straightforward in his interactions with the public. Mr. Unga treated pro se defendants and opposing counsel with fairness and respect. He was polite and quickly became a favorite among the staff. At that time, I was applying to law school and benefited greatly from listening to his arguments in court. Mr. Unga was always well-prepared and had a deep understanding of all relevant statutes and case law.

I also had the opportunity to observe Mr. Unga during jury trials while I was a law clerk at the Circuit Court of the First Circuit on Punchbowl Street. He is persuasive and clear in presenting his arguments, which are always well-structured and easy to understand. He articulates the law and relevant cases effectively when questioned by the court.

In 2021, I began working as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (DPA) in Honolulu. When I joined the felony trials division, Mr. Unga was my Division Chief. During a period when our office was understaffed, Mr. Unga maintained morale among the DPAs. He was always available to discuss case issues or provide support when colleagues needed to vent frustrations. Despite carrying the heaviest workload, Mr. Unga remained composed and led our division through challenging times.

I recall a particular case in which we both had the same defendant. The defendant was arrested for another felony offense prior to sentencing. Pursuant to the plea agreement, the State was no longer able to honor the agreement due to a new felony arrest. Defense counsel filed a motion to withdraw the plea, raising an issue for which there was no precedent in Hawai‘i. I struggled to find persuasive case law, but without being asked, Mr. Unga sent me a draft containing case law from other jurisdictions that we could use for persuasive value. Rather than delegating the task, Mr. Unga led by example and completed the research himself.

Outside of work, I know Mr. Unga to be a devoted family man. He takes time off to spend with his children and is actively involved in his community on the North Shore. The judiciary would be fortunate to have a judge of Mr. Unga's character and abilities.

Mahalo,

Rodney A. Char, Esq.
Deputy Attorney General

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:39:56 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

To Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

For Wilson Unga

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A Unga as a family court judge of the First Circuit. My name is David Lau I am currently a manager at the Polynesian Cultural Center in the maintenance department. I have been working there for over 20 years. I have known Wilson since my high school years while he was in grade school.

He has been a loyal friend and neighbor the entire time I have known him. growing up with Wilson has been a rewarding experience. I remember him as a young man having the responsibility to bless the sacrament for our church. He always performed this duty with reverence even at a young age and I remember him for this. He shows love, kindness, and respect to those around him and now that he is grown and married with children of his own I have found that he is still a loyal friend and neighbor and I have grown to respect him.

Many years ago when he was finishing high school he was extremely generous with his card collection. I had recently lost all my Magic the Gathering cards and he gave his entire collection to me. This really stood out to me in my mind on how generous he was and how he put people first in his life. I will always remember him for his this.

He has served faithfully in his community and is loved by many. I give my highest regards to Wilson Unga and I admire the many achievements he has achieved in his life. I highly recommend Wilson Unga for this position and know he will continue to look out for the best interest of those he serves.

David Lau
(808)478-2705
dalau22@gmail.com

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:52:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of Wilson Unga, a judicial nominee for the District and Family

Courts of the First Circuit Court.

I have known Wilson Unga all of his life as his family are neighbors of mine and I have worked with his parents, been to get together with our families in and out of our respective homes. During this time, Wilson has always impressed me, as he grew up with my boys, through school and many activities.

He is now married and living in the community and is a fine upstanding contributing neighbor. I find his sense of honor and integrity to be among the finest I have seen.

I would be proud to have him as a judge and I know that he would be fair and impartial. Please consider him as I recommend him.

Sincerely,

Lawrence Lau

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 12:38:12 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Laulea Nuku-Day	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

We strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. Through interactions with Wilson at family gatherings, in court and in seeking counsel on personal and family matters, we can confidently attest to the following as a true testament to our nephew's character and qualifications.

Wilson A. Unga would be an exemplary judge for the Family Court of the First Circuit, given his extensive knowledge and expertise as a lawyer, He possesses excellent listening skills demonstrating empathy and attentiveness before rendering decisions. His even temperament, coupled with a good sense of humor, proficiency in the law, and ability to maintain control of the courtroom, ensures that all parties have an opportunity to be heard. Additionally, he exhibits fairness and impartiality. In conclusion, Wilson A. Unga displays exceptional critical thinking and decision-making skills, carefully adhering to legal procedures and applying the law without bias. His strong reading and writing skills further his eligibility.

Thank for your time and consideration.

Delton Day, Command Seargent Major, Ret, US Army

Laulea Nuku-Day, Staff Sergeant, Ret, US Army

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 7:25:38 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
marc shlachter MD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have known Wilson Unga for 40 years and find him to have high moral and ethical standards.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 8:20:09 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

April 18, 2025

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF WILSON A. UNGA

District Family Court of the First Circuit

Aloha Chair Karl Rhoads and Senate Judiciary Committee:

I'm honored to submit this testimony in strong support of Wilson A. Unga's appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have known Wilson for over 15 years, and I can confidentially say he is one of the most principled, qualified and community-minded attorneys I have ever had the privilege of knowing and working with.

Wilson and I first met in law school, and it was evident early on that he was a person of exceptional integrity, humility and character. He has consistently been recognized by his peers for his leadership and service, including being selected by classmates to serve as Class Speaker not only for his law school graduation but also for the Pacific Century Fellows program, a highly selected leadership initiative. These honors speak volumes about the respect and admiration he commands across diverse settings.

Professionally, I had the opportunity to observe Wilson's commitment to justice firsthand during his time as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. His preparation, courtroom demeanor, and advocacy were exemplary. He made a point of learning each judge's specific courtroom practices to ensure his work was not only effective but also respectful of the court's procedures and culture. This level of care reflects the kind of thoughtfulness and professionalism that would serve him well on the bench.

Equally important, Wilson brings a judicial temperament that is steady, respectful, and fair. Even in high-stakes or emotionally charged situations, he remains composed and grounded. He listens actively, considers all sides, and applies the law with both intellect and compassion—traits that are foundational for anyone entrusted with judicial offices.

Wilson's roots in the community run deep. A lifelong resident of Kahuku, he gives generously of his time to mentor and coach youth in the area, modeling the same values of integrity, responsibility, and service that define this professional life. His presence on the bench would

reflect not only legal excellence but also a genuine connection to the people and communities our judiciary services.

In sum, Wilson A. Unga is the kind of leader we should all want in our courts—dedicated, fair-minded, and deeply committed to public service. I offer my full and enthusiastic support for his confirmation and respectfully urge the Committee to approve his appointment.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Mahalo,

Gaison Ontai, esq.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 11:52:06 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hakeai Piutau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is an accomplished legal professional with a deep commitment to justice, community, and public service. His extensive experience in family law and his thoughtful, compassionate approach to the legal process make him an outstanding candidate for this position.

Throughout his career, Mr. Unga has demonstrated fairness, humility, and a genuine concern for the well-being of Hawai'i's families. His cultural sensitivity, integrity, and ability to listen with empathy are essential qualities for a Family Court Judge.

I have every confidence that Mr. Unga will serve with distinction, honor the responsibilities of the bench, and contribute meaningfully to the First Circuit. His confirmation would be a positive and important step for your judicial system and the families it serves.

Thank you for your attention and consideration

JC30

Senate Committee on Judiciary

April 23, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.

Conference Room 225

Re: **Testimony in Strong Support of Wilson A. Unga**, Judicial Appointee to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Wilson A. Unga, judicial appointee for the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Wilson since our time as law students at the William S. Richardson School of Law, where we both served on the Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal. Thereafter, I was fortunate enough to work alongside Wilson as deputy prosecutors following our respective clerkships.

Wilson is a consummate professional – highly intelligent, exceptionally skilled, and a natural leader. Wilson is widely regarded as one of the most talented trial attorneys of our time, earning deep respect within the legal community for both his expertise and his unwavering ethical standards. Despite possessing the ability to excel in the private sector and achieve substantial financial success, Wilson has devoted his career to public service, a testament to his integrity and commitment to justice.

Wilson is well-qualified to serve on the District Family Court. He has been an outstanding and well-respected attorney, who consistently exhibits professionalism and well-temperament. I have no doubt in my mind that as a Judge, Wilson will make just and fair decisions, and that he will be unbiased and impartial.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Cheuk Fu Lui

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. My perspective is uniquely informed by a lifelong relationship with Wilson, as his first cousin on his mother's side. From the cherished memories of babysitting him and his sister, Ina Mae, I have witnessed his remarkable journey into the accomplished legal professional he is today.

Wilson possesses a keen intellect, making every conversation with him enriching. Beyond this, I deeply admire his intellectual honesty and capacity for open dialogue, even amidst differing viewpoints – a quality paramount for a Family Court Judge navigating the diverse and often conflicting perspectives within family law. Growing up in Kahuku, Wilson internalized the principles of fa'a Samoa and anga fakatonga, understanding that true leadership is rooted in humility and service. This foundation, coupled with the profound respect and love he has always shown both his mother and his father, has deeply shaped him into the man he is today. Their close bond has instilled in him a fundamental understanding of mutual respect and care within familial relationships. This upbringing has undoubtedly informed his approach to all individuals, ensuring he treats everyone – women and men alike – with dignity, attentiveness, and genuine care, a crucial attribute for the sensitive matters before the Family Court.

Witnessing Wilson with his own family further underscores his exceptional character and cultural fluency. He actively engages his daughters in their rich Polynesian heritage through bilingualism in Tongan and Samoan, alongside their understanding of Korean culture from his wife's ethnicity. This commitment extends beyond language, as he thoughtfully takes his family on trips to Tonga, Samoa, and Korea, fostering deep, personal connections with their ancestral roots. This intentional immersion in their diverse cultural identities, while embracing Hawaii's unique cultural landscape, reflects the broad understanding and respect for heritage invaluable for a Family Court Judge serving our multicultural community. This dedication to cultural continuity, coupled with the enduring bond Wilson shares with his sister, Ina Mae, speaks volumes about his natural understanding of familial bonds and responsibilities central to Family Court cases. Even in his youth, Wilson consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to family obligations, readily offering his time and support, embodying faka'apa'apa – profound respect and consideration for others – in all his interactions.

Beyond these exceptional personal qualities, Wilson's professional qualifications are equally compelling and directly relevant to the demands of Family Court. His clerkships with the Honorable Lisa M. Givoza and the Honorable Kevin S.C. Chang provided him with invaluable experience in judicial opinion drafting and legal analysis. Furthermore, his tenure as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, culminating in his role as Felony Trials Division Chief, has honed his ability to manage complex cases and render sound judgments under pressure – a critical attribute for a Family Court Judge. Coming from a close-knit family, Wilson inherently understands the profound impact of familial relationships within the broader community.

Wilson Unga is the right candidate for Family Court Judge because his sharp intellect and cultural sensitivity enable him to understand both the legal complexities and human dimensions of family cases. His principled yet open-minded approach fosters respectful dialogue. His strong

family values, evident in his own relationships, reflect the very values Family Court aims to preserve. Having witnessed his culturally grounded impartiality within our extended family, I am confident in his ability to serve Hawaii's diverse families with genuine respect and unwavering integrity, a quality consistently demonstrated throughout his life.

Wilson Unga's exceptional blend of personal integrity, cultural understanding, deep-rooted family commitment, and extensive professional experience uniquely qualifies him to serve as a Family Court Judge. Our families and communities will be profoundly served by his balanced judgment and compassionate approach to justice. I wholeheartedly urge the committee to confirm his appointment.

Sincerely,

Siokapesi F. Nisa
Community Service Specialist, City and County of Honolulu, Department of Community
Services and First Cousin
Phone: 808-658-1481
Email: siokapesi.nisa@gmail.com

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/19/2025 7:55:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Ancheta Jr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To whom it may concern,

I strongly support Wilson Unga's nomination to the court. He is an exemplary citizen, experienced attorney in service to the public, and a terrific person. Wilson will serve the people of Hawaii well, and I have the utmost confidence he will do so with the highest standard of ethics.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Ancheta, Jr.

1640B Dominion Rd. extn Mt. Roskill
Auckland, New Zealand
+6420 49953527
soloainewman@gmail.com

April 2025

Dear *Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee*,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. My name is Newman Soloai and my relationship with Wilson and more especially his parents is because of my wife, Luisa Soloai who has been dear friends/distant cousins with Fifita Unga, Wilson's Mother for the past forty-seven (47) years.

Our relationship with Pita and Fifita, the parents of Wilson, has been personal, intimate, and treasured—especially since our individual marriages took place around the same time in the early 1980s, at the LDS Temple in Laie, Hawaii. This cherished friendship has continued over the years, as our families have grown and shared in the major milestones of our children, who are of similar ages.

Although Luisa and I have lived in New Zealand for the past 42 years, we have consistently observed, admired, and celebrated the many accomplishments and milestones achieved by Pita and Fifita's two children, Wilson and Ina.

Wilson's remarkable achievements and continuous accolades, both at home and internationally—and at such a young age—are a clear reflection of his devoted, hardworking father, Pita, and his wise, intelligent, and trusted mother, Fifita. As a family, their unwavering commitment to each other, to their faith in the LDS Church, and to their Tongan culture is deeply inspiring.

I have personally witnessed Wilson develop and embody these powerful parental qualities. They have shaped him into the outstanding individual he is today, and I have no doubt he will continue to be a person of even greater value and service in the years to come.

Once again, the "rock solid" character and values Wilson developed during his childhood and youth have formed the foundation for his early success and the continued recognition he has received through appointments to highly trusted positions. These include his service in the LDS Church as a Bishop, his role as a devoted husband and father to three daughters, his professional work as a Lawyer, and now—understandably and unsurprisingly—his consideration for appointment as a Family Court Judge.

I strongly believe that Wilson possesses the "rock solid" foundational character, attributes, and proven track record across all major areas of life. His integrity and competence are evident not only in the legal profession, but also in his marriage and

family life, his cultural commitments, his community service, and his steadfast dedication to his LDS faith. He is, without question, a well-suited and thoroughly prepared candidate for this judicial appointment.

I offer my full and unwavering support for Wilson's appointment and respectfully commend him to you as an individual of the highest integrity, sound judgment, and deep commitment to justice and community.

Sincerely,

Newman Soloai

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 7:37:41 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liam A. MILLER	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. UNGA as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I believe that his experience as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney working with family abuse and / or child abuse cases has prepared him for this position. I cannot think of a better candidate for this appointment as a family court judge but my reason for this comes from observing him outside of work.

DPA UNGA spends much of his time outside of work with many of the youth and young adults in our area. He has a responsibility at church where he serves as a mentor to the young people in our community ages 12 to 25. I have observed him show great patience and tact when dealing with kids that are acting in a manner that is too rambunctious for the circumstances. I have also observed DPA UNGA give good counsel to kids that either need direction or some positive encouragement. Lastly, I have seen DPA UNGA take the time to listen to other young people when they have concerns, questions or just want to share ideas about life and / or church stuff. The attention he gives them and the comments or advice I have observed him share, demonstrates that he is someone who wants what is best for others.

I believe that DPA UNGA will continue to do this as a Family Court Judge where he listens with patience, and judges fairly with the best interests of the family and other individuals in mind. In my opinion this service with the young people in our community along with his experience as a Prosecutor shows that DPA UNGA is ready to become a Judge and will evaluate others fairly and justly.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 1:34:11 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patimiosi Folau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

I am writing this letter in support and confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the first circuit. As a family member who has known Wilson closely for many years, I have had the privilege of witnessing his unwavering commitment to justice, fairness, and integrity—not only in his professional life but in his personal interactions as well.

Wilson possesses a calm and balanced demeanor, essential qualities for any judge, especially in the emotionally charged setting of family court. He listens with empathy, speaks with wisdom, and carries himself with humility. These are not only admirable traits—they are crucial in ensuring that both families and individuals are treated with respect, dignity, and compassion during some of the most difficult times in their lives.

His legal experience is matched by his deep-rooted sense of community and cultural awareness. Wilson understands the importance of context in decision-making and is deeply committed to ensuring that each voice is heard.

I have every confidence that Wilson Unga will serve the community with distinction, fairness, and the highest ethical standards.

Sincerely,
Patimiosi Folau

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 1:49:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Adrian Yu-Hoy Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Committee:

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I am a retired attorney, with 42 years of practice. I have known Mr. Unga personally and found him to be of the highest integrity and compassion. I have no hesitation in recommending him to the position of Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

With regards, Adrian Y.H. Chang.

April 20, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF WILSON UNGA
TO SERVE ON THE DISTRICT FAMILY COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT**

Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write to express my **strong support of Wilson Unga** to be confirmed to serve on the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I first met Mr. Unga seven years ago when I began working at the Honolulu Department of the Prosecuting Attorney. At the time, he was a line prosecutor deftly handling his assigned cases while always being available to his more junior colleagues to ask his advice. Over the years, Mr. Unga advanced, taking on managerial positions at the Department. In those roles, he demonstrated true leadership, never asking his people to do something that he would not and always taking on his share of new cases.

In one instance, Mr. Unga and another prosecutor were tasked with a particularly challenging assignment. In the Department library, they set up a special work area where they could work after hours. During that time, I recall seeing Mr. Unga going about his usual work and assisting those who asked for his help. I had no idea that he was working on a special assignment until I saw the work area in the library and someone told me. Mr. Unga's work product and availability never decreased despite the additional responsibilities.

Mr. Unga is someone from whom we all would, and should, benefit from serving on the bench. In his work, he is dedicated. In his judgment, he is considered. In his life, he is kind. It is the last of these qualities in particular that brings to mind a quote: "Fill the seats of justice with good men, not so absolute in goodness as to forget what human frailty is."

I whole-heartedly support Wilson Unga to serve on the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I ask the Committee to send his nomination to the full Senate for speedy confirmation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Thomas J. Michener, Esq.

Ana Vainikolo
124A Western Springs Rd
Morningside, AKL 1022
anaveilikoula@gmail.com
17 April, 2025

Chair Rhoads and Members of
the Senate Judiciary Committee
417 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: JC 30- Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. Unga for District
Family Court Judge, First Circuit**

Dear Chief Justice Recktenwald,

I am writing this letter in strong support of Wilson Unga's nomination for a judicial opening at the district and family courts. I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson for many years, both in his capacity as a community leader and as a person of unwavering integrity, fairness, and commitment to service.

Wilson currently serves as a Bishop for the BYU-Hawaii 12 Students Ward, where he provides spiritual guidance, emotional support, and practical assistance to individuals and families in need. His role requires an exceptional level of empathy, wisdom, and conflict resolution skills-qualities that are essential for a judicial position. His ability to listen carefully, exercise sound judgment, and lead with compassion has made a significant impact on our community.

Beyond his religious leadership, Wilson is also the Assistant President of our family community in New Zealand. In this role, he has demonstrated remarkable dedication to fostering unity and uplifting those around him. His recent travels to New Zealand for a committee meeting exemplify his commitment to service. He personally brought clothing and essential goods to distribute among community members, ensuring that those in need were cared for. Additionally, his generous financial contribution toward securing a venue for the 2025 annual reunion highlights his selflessness and dedication to preserving and strengthening our cultural and familial ties.

Wilson's moral character, strong sense of justice, and dedication to the well-being of others make him an outstanding candidate for the judicial position. His ability to assess situations objectively, mediate conflicts with fairness, and uphold principles of justice and equity will undoubtedly make him a valuable addition to the judiciary.

I wholeheartedly endorse Wilson Unga's nomination and strongly believe that his leadership, integrity, and commitment to serving others make him highly qualified for this role. Please feel free to contact me if further information is needed.

Sincerely,
Ana Vainikolo

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 5:01:43 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lyle Keanini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have known Wilson since 2008, and I've had the privilege of knowing him during law school, including our time with the Asian-Pacific Law & Policy Journal. He's always had a great work ethic and understanding of the law. His educational and occupational accomplishments speak for themselves. But more than that, he is someone with great moral character, integrity, and someone who I absolutely trust.

As a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney on Maui, I was aware of some of his big cases and also interacted with him while at Prosecutor trainings. I had the privilege of clerking for the Honorable Richard T. Bissen, Jr. from 2011-2012, and appearing before him regularly in his courtroom for many years involving felony and domestic violence cases. I deeply admire Judge Bissen, and I have learned so much from him. In my opinion, Judge Bissen is the best judge to have ever sat on the bench in any courtroom. I see a lot of similarities in Wilson, and I see the potential Wilson has as a judge if he were appointed. Wilson cares for people, and because he is a great listener, he has an ability to discern and boil things down to what is most important. This ability, combined with his intellect and legal experience, has made him the outstanding legal professional he is today.

Wilson is someone that I want on the bench. And it's not because I think he'd rule in my favor or in favor of those I care about. It's because I know he would be fair and just, and he would exemplify a lot of the characteristics Judge Bissen demonstrated during his time on the bench.

Sincerely,

Lyle Keanini

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 5:25:23 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Rose	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for the confirmaiton of Wilson Unga to serve as a District Court Family Judge. I had the privilege of working under Mr. Unga’s leadership between 2021 and 2023 in the Domestic Violence Felony Unit at the Honolulu Prosecutor’s Office, where he served as our team captain while I was a line prosecutor.

During my time working with Mr. Unga, I witnessed firsthand his exceptional legal acumen, strong leadership, and unwavering dedication to justice. As the team captain for the domestic violence felony unit, he was responsible for supervising three other attorneys while managing his own caseload including murders, attempted murders, and other high-level complex cases. Domestic violence prosecution is extremely difficult work, having to deal with highly emotional cases that require a deep understanding of both the law and the dynamics of abuse. As a domestic violence prosecutor, Mr. Unga demonstrated an extraordinary ability to find compassion and empathy for all parties involved and sought out the just resolution to a case – not merely a conviction for conviction’s sake. Under his leadership I learned that we had to approach our cases with fairness and integrity, ever mindful of the serious impact our decisions had on victims, defendants, and their families.

I also had the opportunity to second-chair Mr. Unga in an attempted murder trial before the Honorable Kevin Souza of the First Circuit, where I saw firsthand his poise under pressure. His ability to think strategically while maintaining a commitment to fairness with opposing counsel are among the many qualities that would make Mr. Unga an exceptional judge.

In January 2023, Mr. Unga was promoted to division chief of the Trials Division, where he now oversees the prosecution of most felony cases in the Honolulu Prosecutor’s Office. In that role, he oversees five team captains and many line prosecutors. This promotion is a testament to his skill, professionalism, and ability to lead with integrity.

Beyond this, Mr. Unga is an outstanding mentor to younger attorneys, including myself. He took the time to train and guide new attorneys, ensuring that we not only understood the legal intricacies of our cases but also how to exercise good judgment, maintain professionalism, and advocate effectively in court. His willingness to invest in the development of junior prosecutors speaks to his leadership and patience. His mentorship played a crucial role in shaping my approach to trial work and working with victims of domestic violence.

Wilson Unga's depth of experience, keen legal judgment, and dedication to justice make him an outstanding candidate for judicial appointment. His extensive experience handling serious felony cases, along with his strong leadership in the legal community, uniquely qualify him to serve on the District Court Family bench. I have no doubt that he will approach the role with fairness, impartiality, and the highest ethical standards. I strongly urge you to confirm his as a District Court Family judge.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Rose

To Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I am honored to recommend Wilson, whom I've had the pleasure of working with in a volunteer capacity for the past five years. Wilson serves as both a youth leader and an ecclesiastical leader in our church and is a dedicated, reliable, and service-oriented individual who truly cares about the people around him.

Even with his many responsibilities, he always takes the time to listen, support, and make others feel valued. His ability to balance his commitments while still being there for those who need him is truly admirable. He's a great role model and a positive influence in our community.

I have no doubt that Wilson will make a fair and honorable judge. I highly recommend him and wish him the best in this confirmation.

Sincerely,
Wendy Pagador M.Ed

Date: April 19, 2025

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: JC30, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee, Wilson A. Unga

Hearing: Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 9:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
415 South Beretania Street

It is my honor to write this testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Judicial Nominee Wilson A. Unga as judge for the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have known Mr. Unga for over ten years in his capacity as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney.

Mr. Unga possesses the characteristics and skills necessary to be an excellent judge. He possesses great legal acumen. Mr. Unga is professional with everyone he encounters whether he is speaking to a judge or speaking to a member of the community. He treats everyone with dignity and respect regardless of status. I have never witnessed Mr. Unga behave or speak in an inappropriate manner.

Over the years, as a Deputy Public Defender for the State Office of the Public Defender, I have represented defendants in numerous felony cases in which Mr. Unga has been the assigned Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. What I appreciate about Mr. Unga is though he is a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, he sees the humanity in defendants. He is tough, but reasonable.

Mr. Unga is a fighter for the complaining witnesses in his cases, yet he is willing to work towards resolving cases in a manner fair to all involved. He is collaborative when necessary and steadfast when needed. Even though we are in an adversarial system, Mr. Unga understands the meaning of the word justice. He understands that justice balances the interests of the complaining witness with the rights of the accused. He understands there are consequences for actions which require a level of punishment. He also understands, however, there is a place for mercy in our justice system. In his legal practice, Mr. Unga consistently demonstrates he is a person of strong character.

Mr. Unga has a great disposition and temperament. My interactions with him have always been pleasant. Few others have the level of temperament Mr. Unga possesses. I believe this trait will be his greatest asset as a judge.

Again, I strongly support the confirmation of Judicial Nominee Wilson A. Unga as judge for the District Family Court of the First Circuit. If selected, Mr. Unga will be a positive reflection of the Hawaii State Judiciary.

Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my testimony in support of Judicial Nominee Wilson A. Unga.

Respectfully,

/S/OKECHUKWU AMADI

Okechukwu “Okie” Amadi
Deputy Public Defender
State of Hawaii

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 7:06:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vilisoni Kotobalavu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Wilson Unga I strongly support you all and in supporting him to be a Family Judge in our family Court system in our state of Hawaii. I new Wilson since 1995 until today as his cup scout and boys scout leader. I was so blessed to knew him as time in life I was also his Family Ward Bishop in the area where we residing. I came to be close to him and his family alike. Wilson Unga is matured, very balanced, in his life and he iis very well prepared and he is ready to adventure into a new horizon.

Wilson Unga spent 2 years in Japan I believe from 2003- 2005. Serving for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints as a fulltime missionary. This alone is a very remarkable occasion to a young life and Wilson went through a time in life when I was his Bishop in our community.

Wilson is very respected in our community. I believe with all my heart that Wilson Unga Is someone who is well groomed, well prepared to handle any task provided to him.

i strongly endorsed Wilson Unga is well prepared now to handle any obligation and to be a appointed as a Judge for the Family court Here in Honolulu, Hawaii.

sincerely and humbly,

vilisoni kotobalavu

808-256-7914

tuvana516@gmail.com

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 6:04:13 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alamita Alatini	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I testify and fully support the confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee, WILSON A. UNGA, for a term to expire in 6 years.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:12:56 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth-Eleanor Kara	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family court Judge of the First Circuit. Wilson is an individual of honor and respect to his family, friends, community and love ones. I looked up to him like an older brother growing up because of the characteristics he portrayed in a professional manner. He dedicates more of his time to more important things in life. He definitely wants to help and better the world by helping others to know their self worth. Wilson and his great works is positive always and is a great remodel for all. He impacts many and definitely will make a big difference in the lives of others.

Thankyou and Mahalos.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:49:46 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Finau Hafoka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mr. Wilson Unga is well prepared to serve the State of Hawai‘i and its people with love, loyal, and integrity. He is a product of Kahuku community and our public school and has set a positive example for young people to follow. The Community that raised him pledges our support of his confirmation for we know he will be an excellent public servant to interpret the law, without any pressure or external influence, and will uphold the constitutions of our great Aloha State of Hawai‘i. Ua Mau ke Ea o ka Aina i ka Pono!

WOOD LAW WILLS & TRUSTS

A.P.C.

April 21, 2025

Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: Wilson Unga Recommendation

Dear Chief Justice Recktenwald,

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Wilson Unga for the position of judge. I have known Wilson since 2008, when we met during our first year of law school, and I can attest to his exceptional character and qualifications.

Beginning in law school and during his work at the prosecutor's office, Wilson has consistently demonstrated unwavering ethical standards. He is dedicated to the rule of law and the unique ability of the judicial system to positively impact society.

One thing I admire about Wilson is his sincere interest and care for the well-being of others. He treats people with respect, dignity, and fairness. I have witnessed this in his family, his community, and his interactions with colleagues.

I am confident that Wilson would be an outstanding addition to the judiciary. His combination of legal acumen, ethical conduct, and interpersonal skills makes him an ideal candidate for this esteemed position.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Wood, Esq.

Dr. Ricardo Vicente
55-463 B Moana Street
Laie, HI, 96762
Ricardo.vicente@byuh.edu
(808) 796-7832
April, 21 2025

The Honorable Members of the Hawaii Senate
Hawaii State Capitol

RE: Letter of Support for the Appointment of Mr. Wilson Unga as District Family Court Judge

Dear Honorable Senators,

It is with great respect and confidence that I write this letter in support of Mr. Wilson Unga's appointment as a District Family Court Judge. I have had the privilege of knowing Mr. Unga for the past seven years, and in that time, I have come to know him as a person of exceptional integrity, dedication, and compassion.

Mr. Unga is a man deeply committed to justice and fairness. His honesty is beyond reproach, and he approaches every situation with a calm, thoughtful demeanor that reflects his deep moral grounding. These are precisely the qualities that inspire trust and confidence in a judicial setting.

In addition to his professional qualifications, Mr. Unga is a devoted family man who leads by example. His strong sense of responsibility and the care he shows for his family mirror the empathy and understanding required of someone serving in Family Court. His ability to balance firmness with compassion is one of his greatest strengths.

Moreover, Mr. Unga is an active and generous contributor to our community. Whether through mentorship, volunteer service, or advocacy, he consistently invests his time and energy into making a positive impact on the lives of others. He is widely respected and admired, not only for his work but for the genuine care he shows to those around him.

I firmly believe that Mr. Unga will serve the District Family Court with honor, fairness, and an unwavering commitment to justice. His character, experience, and dedication make him an ideal candidate for this important role.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Vicente

Here's a refined version of your email that improves clarity, flow, and professionalism while maintaining the heartfelt tone:

Subject: Recommendation for Wilson Unga –District Family Courts of the First Circuit

Aloha and mahalo for the opportunity to offer my strong recommendation for Wilson Unga to the District/ Family Courts of the First Circuit.

I first met Wilson when he graduated from Kahuku High School, where he was recognized for academic excellence by the Lumina'i Scholarship Committee in the Samoan community. I had the honor of presenting him with his award. Even at that young age, Wilson aspired to attend college, pursue law school, and study international law.

Our paths crossed again when Wilson was a student at the William S. Richardson School of Law at UH Mānoa. At the time, he was participating in the Prosecutor's Law Clinic and appeared before me during traffic arraignments and pleas. I was so proud to see him following his dream that I called a brief recess and asked the bailiff to bring him into my chambers to personally congratulate him.

Upon graduating from law school, Wilson joined the Prosecutor's Office and has since appeared before me in both District and Circuit Court. Over the years, I've observed him handle traffic cases, domestic violence cases, and felony jury trials. He is a quick learner, consistently courteous to the court and staff, and always respectful to defense counsel and their clients.

Wilson and I are now members of the Lumina'i Scholarship Committee, the same organization that recognized his achievements years ago. Together, we support young Samoan students pursuing higher education by providing financial assistance toward their college expenses.

Having known Wilson for about 30 years during my time on the bench, I can confidently say he is a hard worker, compassionate, intelligent, and consistently respectful to everyone he encounters. He is a man of character and integrity, and I firmly believe he would be an outstanding addition to the First Circuit Court.

More importantly, his elders, ancestors and kupuna would be doing the Siva and praising Ke Akua for his blessings.

Wilson is following his true north, and I have no doubt he will continue to make our state and the Pacific Islands proud.

Mahalo and fa'afetai tele for your time and consideration.

Fa'auuga To'oto'o

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Testimony in Strong Support of JC30: Appointment of Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

Aloha and thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of JC30, the nomination of Mr. Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is an accomplished legal professional whose deep roots in the community, extensive courtroom experience, and unwavering commitment to justice make him exceptionally well-qualified for this important role. A graduate of both Georgetown University and the William S. Richardson School of Law, Mr. Unga has consistently exemplified the highest standards of public service throughout his career.

As a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu, Mr. Unga has served as Chief of the Felony Trials Division and Team Captain of the Domestic Violence Felony Team, where he demonstrated an uncommon blend of legal expertise, steady leadership, and profound empathy—especially in cases impacting some of our most vulnerable families.

What distinguishes Mr. Unga, beyond his impressive professional resume, is his steadfast integrity, humility, and cultural sensitivity—qualities that are critical in Family Court. His active participation on the Judicial Administration Committee, the Court Interpreters and Language Access Committee, and the Pacific Islander Legal Association Board speaks to his deep commitment to equity, inclusion, and access to justice.

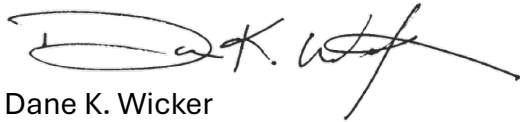
Mr. Unga is also a mentor, youth leader, and community advocate who embodies the values we hope to see on the bench. Whether mentoring aspiring lawyers, guiding youth in faith-based and civic activities, or quietly offering support at school and community events, he leads with humility and purpose. His lived understanding of the cultural diversity that defines our islands will serve as a cornerstone of his judicial temperament and decision-making.

The testimony submitted by legal peers, educators, family members, and community leaders—many spanning decades of personal and professional relationships—paint a clear and consistent portrait of a man whose life has been marked by service, compassion, and integrity. Whether adjudicating felony cases or comforting a child at a school event, Mr. Unga leads with both heart and wisdom.

For all these reasons, I respectfully urge this Committee to confirm the appointment of Wilson A. Unga to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. His confirmation would be a profound benefit to the judiciary and the families of Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dane K. Wicker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dane K. Wicker

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 12:58:08 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Toakase	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

On behalf of Wilson Unga, I would like to say what I know about his character.

He is loving, understanding, humbling, respecting, trustworthy, sincerely and committed in whatever he is doing. Not only to his own family but to everyone in our community. At present he is a leader as a Bishop in the church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He is a person who walks the talk.

I wish him all the best in pursuing his future career.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs Toakase Folau

7 Friesian Dr Mangere Auckland NZ

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 1:12:47 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson since attending law school together at the William S. Richardson School of Law. To give you an idea of Wilson's exceptional intelligence, integrity, and character, he was chosen by our class to provide the student address at our law school graduation. His selection for this role came as a surprise to no one and he delivered.

Throughout his legal career that followed, Wilson has continued to demonstrate a deep commitment to fairness, justice, and public service. His unwavering respect for all individuals, brilliant legal mind, and humble nature make him uniquely qualified to serve on the bench. I wholeheartedly support his confirmation.



April 21, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania Street.
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Wilson A. Unga as a nominee to serve as a Judge within the District and Family Courts of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson for the past five years through the Pacific Century Fellows program, and I consider him not only a dear friend but also one of the most principled individuals I know.

Wilson possesses a high moral compass that guides his decisions and actions. His logical and practical approach to problem-solving is complemented by an unwavering commitment to justice and fairness. I can say without reservation that there is no one I know who embodies the character and temperament necessary to serve Hawaii as a judge better than Wilson.

Throughout our friendship, I have consistently been impressed by Wilson's ability to analyze complex issues with clarity and compassion. He listens thoughtfully to diverse perspectives and approaches every situation with an open mind and a deep sense of responsibility. His dedication to the community and commitment to the rule of law make him an exemplary candidate for this role.

I have no doubt that Wilson will bring the same integrity, wisdom, and dedication to the bench as he has demonstrated in all his endeavors. He will serve the people of Hawaii with distinction and honor.

Thank you for considering my recommendation for Wilson Unga.

Sincerely,

Butch Galdeira
President
Diamond Bakery

Judiciary Committee Hawai'i State Senate

415 South Beretania St

Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: April 23, 2025 Testimony in strong support of Wilson A. Unga's appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I am honored to write this letter of recommendation in support of Wilson A. Unga as he is considered for appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson for the last 20 years. I can state without reservation that he embodies the highest standards of honesty, diligence, and integrity.

I have known Wilson since our days at Kahuku High and Intermediate. He has always been a hard worker that isn't scared of doing hard things. He studied hard to get into Georgetown out of high school and then went on to get his Law Degree. He consistently goes above and beyond expectations, handling responsibilities with thoroughness and care. He does not cut corners and always take the time to ensure that every case is treated with the seriousness it deserves.

Most importantly, Wilson possess a strong moral compass. His integrity is not just a professional quality—it is a way of life. Wilson is someone who can always be trusted to do what is right, not what is easy.

It is my firm belief that Wilson A. Unga will make an outstanding judge—one who brings honor to the bench and serves with humility, fairness, and distinction. I recommend him without hesitation.

Sincerely,

LeGrand Goo

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 3:00:03 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Manu Finau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chief Justice Recktenwald,

I Manu Finau am writing to express my unwavering support for Wilson Unga, a remarkable member of our community whose character and values greatly deserve your recognition. Wilson has consistently demonstrated an admirable commitment to his family, his congregation, and the broader community, embodying principles of care, empathy, and love in all his interactions.

Throughout the years, Wilson has proven himself to be an outstanding citizen, dedicated to doing what is right for everyone he encounters. His integrity and sense of responsibility set a standard that inspires those around him. Whether it is through his volunteer work or his efforts to uplift others, Wilson has made a significant positive impact that resonates within our community.

Moreover, Wilson's passion in every endeavour he undertakes is evident and serves as a beacon of hope and encouragement for those who have the privilege of knowing him. His positive attitude and dedication to community service are truly commendable.

I respectfully urge you to consider this commendation as a testament to Wilson Unga's exceptional character and contributions.

Thank you for taking the time to acknowledge an individual who embodies the very best of our values

Sincerely,

Manu Finau

Hofoa,
Kolomotu'a
Tongatapu
TONGA.

22 April 2025.

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee
Supreme Court of Hawaii

Re: Submission of Testimony on behalf of Wilson A. Unga

To whom it may concern,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I've known Mr Unga for 4 years. He is diligent and a hard-working father. He is honest and very dedicated. I know that he will do great things for the people of your excellent country. He is trustworthy and I believe that he will perform his duty to the best of his abilities. I am proud and very happy to see him work and serve your country. I trust him and support him.

I sincerely hope that this letter will finds you well.

Respectfully,



.....
'Akesa T Piutau

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 3:33:48 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Franklin Troy Fegurgur	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha:

I'm writing in support for Mr. Wilson Unga to be a District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I knew Mr. Unga when I was employed at the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office (Felony Trials Department division). Mr. Unga's legal knowledge and courtroom experience is unparalleled. However, I had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Unga not only as a supervisor but as a mentor. Mr. Unga never hesitated to help me or other young prosecutors whenever we were lost and confused. He showed great patience and broke down our issues to effectively resolve our respective questions. His willingness to help others is a trait that will bring him much success on the bench.

Mr. Unga's character and demeanor is exactly what the Judiciary needs: someone who knows the law and is able to carry forth his duties with not only humility, but compassion.

I sincerely and wholeheartedly support his nomination and confirmation to this prestigious position.

Thank you for your time,

Mahalo,

Franklin Troy Fegurgur

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 3:49:50 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keni Kalama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 21, 2025

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Supreme Court of Hawai'i

417 South King Street

Honolulu, HI 96813

Fax: 808-539-4703

Subject: Letter of Recommendation for Wilson Unga

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am honored to write this letter in support of Wilson Unga's nomination for a judgeship in the District Court and the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have known Wilson for several years, and I can say without hesitation that he is a man of integrity, fairness, and deep commitment to serving others.

Wilson is one of the most honest, hardworking, and compassionate individuals I have had the privilege of knowing. He has consistently demonstrated a strong moral compass and a genuine dedication to justice, which I believe makes him an outstanding candidate for this role. His ability to approach challenges with thought and empathy allows him to connect with people from all walks of life, whether he is working with youth, families, or the elderly.

Beyond his professional qualifications, Wilson has shown a commitment to the well-being of our community and our island's diverse cultures. He has devoted countless hours to community service and church activities, always willing to lend a helping hand and support

those in need. His ability to listen, understand, and thoughtfully navigate difficult situations speaks volumes about his character and leadership.

I have no doubt that Wilson will serve with honor and distinction. His sense of fairness, humility, and respect for the law will be an asset to the judiciary and to the people of Hawai'i. I support his nomination and appointment to this prestigious position.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information.

Mahalo piha,

Keni Kalama

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 3:58:49 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Miyahira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to strongly support the nomination of Wilson A. Unga to fill the vacancy in the Family District Court. I am a retired career prosecutor having served in the Prosecutor's office for Maui County from November 1992 through October 2003, the Office of the Attorney General, Criminal Justice Division, from October 2004 through February 2011, and the Prosecutor's office for the City and County of Honolulu, from March 2011 through June 2023. Wilson A. Unga joined the Prosecutor's office in 2013 and I worked alongside him at the Circuit Court starting in 2016 when I moved back into a trial division from the screening division. In 2023, Wilson A. Unga was promoted to the Division Supervisor of the Felony Trials Division where I was a supervisor of the misdemeanor jury demand team. As a result, I consulted with Wilson A. Unga on many of my trial cases and also worked together with him to provide training to the other deputy prosecutors in the Felony Trial Division. I was always impressed with Wilson A. Unga's strong work ethic, his level of preparation, his strong sense of fairness, and his good temperament. Wilson A. Unga is a very likable person and was able to contribute to the strong bonding of the members of the Felony Trials Division. Wilson A. Unga is well liked and respected by both the other prosecutors in the office and the support staff. I feel that his time as a Division Supervisor helped to strengthen his management skills that would serve him well as a Family District Court Judge. I conclude by strongly supporting Wilson A. Unga to fill the vacancy in the Family District Court.

Catherine H. Payne
98-715 Iho Place #1404
Aiea, HI 96701
808-223-3146
catherinepaynehawaii@gmail.com

April 21, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Testimony in Support of Wilson A. Unga's Confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am pleased to provide testimony in support of Wilson Unga's appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Mr. Unga for more than 25 years. He was part of the first group of Samoan Scholars to receive the Lumina'i Scholarship that was conceived by a group of Farrington High School educators and established with the support of a multitude of community partners and leaders.

I followed Mr. Unga's educational and professional journey as I continued to be a supporter of the Lumina'i Scholarship program. During the early years he would often return to assist with scholarship presentations and share his wisdom with the young people being honored. He became one of our donors and later took on the big task of chairing the entire program. Through all this time he has exemplified the highest levels of character and personal ethics, and his influence on young people continues to make a lasting difference. Under his leadership, the Lumina'i Scholarship Program still provides guidance and financial support to young people who will become our leaders, as has Wilson Unga.

I am so impressed by Wilson Unga's willingness to give back to our community through both his professional work and community service. In this new role he will have more opportunities to positively impact families and youth. Thank you for giving his appointment every consideration.

Sincerely,



Catherine H. Payne

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 4:38:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kellen Moriarty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write to strongly support your consideration of Wilson Unga, who has been nominated to fill one of the judicial vacancies in Hawai'i's District Court of the First Circuit and District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have known Mr. Unga for more than 20 years and can personally attest to his integrity and deep commitment to justice.

As a classmate and roommate of mine at Georgetown University, Mr. Unga consistently impressed me as a diligent worker who had a remarkable intellect. More importantly, he was trusted and deeply respected by his many friends on campus. He was well known for enriching the Georgetown community through events and activities that celebrated Hawai'ian heritage and educated students about Pacific Islander cultures. Mr. Unga demonstrated a notable ability to understand the perspectives of people from a wide range of backgrounds. This was evidenced by the two years he spent representing his church in Japan.

In the years since we studied together, Mr. Unga has dedicated his professional life to public service as a prosecutor in Honolulu. While devoting considerable energy to this important position, he has been no less devoted on his personal life as a husband, a father to three daughters, and a leading member of his church community. I am confident that Mr. Unga will approach his role as a judge with the same dedication, fairness, and wisdom that have defined his personal and professional life. I wholeheartedly endorse him for this position and urge you to give his nomination your fullest consideration.

Sincerely,
Kellen Moriarty
Georgetown University Class of 2006

To Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I live and work in the Kahuku – Laie area. Originally, from the Big Island, I have resided in this area since 1977.

Wilson Unga, like Honorable Judge Bode Uale, come from the same area and seem to share the same values and humble upbringing.

Wilson is intelligent, courageous, patient, a great listener, impartial, and one who understands the law. I have witnessed these qualities in his interaction with members of our community. He has the ability of engaging with the youth and adults in healthy discussions and often offering sound solutions or recommendations.

His recent experience as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, combined with these characteristics and abilities allows him to better help people.

Often, you will find Wilson, his lovely wife and daughters involved with many community events and activities. His care and aloha for people is very noticeable.

I strongly recommend Wilson for this significant role and believe that he will uphold the values of the judiciary.

Sincerely,

Lance K Pagador

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am honored to submit my strong support for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Growing up on the North Shore of Oahu, Wilson has always been a strong leader—someone who instinctively steps forward to serve and uplift those around him. From an early age, he demonstrated a deep commitment to his community, embodying the values of responsibility, integrity, and fairness that would later define his legal career.

Wilson is not only an accomplished legal professional but also a true role model within the community. His ability to lead with wisdom, compassion, and an unwavering dedication to justice has made a lasting impact on those he serves. Whether mentoring others, advocating for families, or fostering trust within the judicial system, Wilson approaches every interaction with sincerity and fairness. He understands the diverse challenges that families face, and he consistently leads with both intellect and heart—qualities essential for ensuring justice is administered with dignity and equity.

Beyond his professional qualifications, Wilson's lifelong dedication to serving others has shaped his approach to leadership. His influence extends far beyond the courtroom, touching the lives of those he supports, mentors, and uplifts. His strong moral compass and thoughtful decision-making make him uniquely suited for this role, where he will be making rulings that profoundly impact families and individuals.

I firmly believe that Wilson Unga's confirmation will be an asset to our judicial system and community. He embodies the values we seek in a Family Court Judge: integrity, fairness, and a deep-rooted commitment to justice.

I respectfully urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to confirm Wilson's appointment and allow him the opportunity to continue making a lasting, positive impact on the lives of families throughout our state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nerisha Fotu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent dot over the 'i' in Nerisha.

Nerisha Ivalani Fotu

808-500-3611

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION OF WILSON A. UNGA TO THE DISTRICT FAMILY COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT

Hawaii Senate Judiciary Committee - **JC30**

Hearing Date: April 23, 2025, 9:15 a.m.

April 21, 2025

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in strong support of Mr. Wilson A. Unga's nomination to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I am honored to express my full support for his confirmation.

As a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, I work closely with individuals and families whose lives have intersected with the family court system. These encounters are often significant and deeply impactful. In a trauma-informed State like ours, it is essential that we have judicial leaders who understand the weight of these experiences and who embody compassion, fairness, and integrity. Without hesitation, I can say that Wilson exemplifies these values.

Wilson's professional background reflects his legal expertise, leadership, and enduring commitment to public service. Over the years, I have had the pleasure of witnessing his contributions to our community firsthand. I have seen him generously volunteer his time and share his insights with healthcare professionals at patient safety conferences. He brings a genuine, collaborative spirit that fosters meaningful connections and effective problem-solving—qualities that are vital in addressing the complex challenges facing our families and communities.

Wilson is known for his sound judgment, impartiality, and ability to remain composed under pressure. His thoughtful and empathetic approach, combined with his capacity to listen deeply and make informed decisions, makes him exceptionally well-suited to serve on the Family Court bench.

I am confident that Wilson will serve with distinction, fairness, and a deep sense of duty to the people of Hawai'i. I respectfully urge the committee to confirm his appointment.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,

Christine Loui, MS, ACNS-BC, PMHNP-BC, APRN

Jason DeMarco
Honolulu, HI 96822

21 April 2025

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

RE: SUPPORT for Judiciary Communication No. 30 – Chief Justice’s Appointment Order No. 2025-3 Wilson Unga – District Family Court of the First Circuit

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Writing this letter to you in SUPPORT and recommendation of Wilson Unga to be appointed a judge for the District Court and District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Wilson for fifteen years since we first worshiped together at a church in Honolulu. Wilson’s family has subsequently moved to north shore but our families have kept in touch through the years.

Wilson is a man of integrity, optimism, and hard work.

Integrity. Wilson has always exhibited to me a truthfulness in his words and deeds. His demeanor and behavior have never made anyone I am aware of question his sincerity or honesty. When he has indicated he will do something, he has followed up and done it.

Optimism. When we served together in leadership positions with the adult men of our Honolulu church, Wilson always counseled and advised me with a spirit of love and optimism toward the men we served and about the future. When I moved from the Church unit first, Wilson assumed my prior duties of presidency as he was well prepared and willing to serve. Even when things have been hard for him and his family, he has shown amazing patience and optimism that things will work out. Then he rolls up his sleeves and helps make that happen.

Hard work. Though the years I have seen Wilson work through challenges both domestic and professional. He has always been willing to put in the time to work with people to make things right and smooth over differences of opinion or expectations.

As an architectural expert witness, I engage with our criminal justice system in arbitration and jury proceedings on construction disputes. Speaking from that experience I know that having Wilson as a judge finding the right balance of justice and mercy, patient deliberations, and seeking truth is the exactly right place for him as a judge in our District Court.

Please support this nomination for Wilson Unga as a District Judge.

Sincerely,



Jason DeMarco, AIA, LEED AP BD+C
Owner of Polyline Architecture and Urbanism
Hawaii representative to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) national Strategic Council
Board of Directors, AIA Hawaii
Member, Manoa Neighborhood Board

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:22:48 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sinatauata Tau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write to express overwhelming support for Wilson Unga to be confirmed as District Family Court Judge. Mr. Unga possesses the integrity, judicial temperament, competence, and diligence necessary to faithfully execute the duties of a judicial officer. I have known Mr. Unga for at least five years; he possesses great character and a sincere work ethic; and he has consistently shown his unwavering love and compassion for the Hawai'i community as a whole. This is not only through his career as a prosecutor, where he has exercised fairness and reasonableness in his management of cases, treating imprisoned defendants as humans deserving of opportunities to reintegrate into society, but also through his participation in various community activities, to include previously serving as an advocate supporting public interest law initiatives. Even more admirable, Mr. Unga has endeavored to make a difference in the lives of young folks in at-risk communities on the west side of O'ahu by traveling to and speaking at schools like Wai'anae High School, not just about the criminal justice system, but also about his own path to the legal profession, to encourage these young folks that they, too, can have a successful future. Overall, Mr. Unga is plainly dedicated to serving and improving the Hawai'i community, and he is absolutely deserving of a judicial position. The Hawai'i community would be immensely privileged to have Mr. Unga as one of its judicial officers.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:42:17 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elyse Oyama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary

RE: JC 30, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee, WILSON A. UNGA, for a term to expire in 6 years.

Hearing: Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 9:15 a.m.

I am writing to strongly recommend Wilson Unga for the position on the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Wilson for over seven years in his role as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney and as the current Chief of the Felony Prosecution Division, and I can attest to his professionalism, integrity, and dedication to the community.

Wilson is a positive and grounded individual, consistently demonstrating fairness and open-mindedness in every situation. He values input from others and is always willing to listen, which are important qualities that are essential for a Family Court judge. His ability to consider diverse perspectives with empathy and patience speaks to his excellent judicial temperament.

As a proven leader, Wilson has earned the respect of his peers through his thoughtful decision-making and tireless work ethic. I have seen him handle his cases with care and thoroughness.

Wilson Unga's character, experience, and commitment to justice make him exceptionally well-suited for the bench. I have no doubt that he will serve with the same integrity, compassion, and dedication he has always shown throughout his legal career.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Elyse Oyama

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:55:51 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bella Finau-Faumuina	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

As his older cousin, I offer my heartfelt and unwavering support for his nomination. I have had the distinct privilege of knowing Wilson throughout his life and can attest to the exceptional character and steadfast integrity that define him.

From a young age, Wilson has consistently demonstrated the qualities of an upstanding individual. He is a dedicated father and husband, embodying the very principles of family and commitment that are so vital to Family Court. His devotion to his loved ones is paramount, reflecting a deep understanding of the significance of strong familial bonds.

Wilson's commitment extends beyond his immediate family and into the broader community. He has consistently served in various important roles throughout his community, which include his current leadership role as the bishop of a Brigham Young University of Hawai'i's congregation. Through his many years of service, Wilson has always demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility and a genuine desire to contribute positively to the lives of others.

A guiding principle throughout Wilson's life has been the powerful admonishment of his parents and family to proudly uphold the name and reputation of those he represents. This deeply ingrained value has shaped his actions and ensured that he act with honor and integrity. The remarkable sacrifices made by Wilson's family have been a constant source of motivation for him, instilling a profound appreciation for hard work, perseverance, and the importance of supporting others..

In my personal experience as his cousin, Wilson A. Unga embodies the best of our family. His strong moral compass, his deep respect for community values (as I have come to understand them through him), his unwavering commitment to his family, and the profound impact of his family's journey make him exceptionally well-suited to serve as a Family Court Judge. I am confident that he will bring to this crucial role fairness, empathy, and a profound dedication to upholding the principles of justice.

I urge you to favorably consider his nomination. Mahalo nui for your time and consideration.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:04:12 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Luisa Pelletier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. To know Wilson is to witness a life dedicated to exemplary conduct and meaningful contribution. As his cousin I testify that Wilson hasn't simply navigated life; he has embraced it with purpose and integrity, consistently making choices that have shaped him into the remarkable individual he is today.

His success extends far beyond professional achievements. Wilson is a devoted husband and father, a caring son and grandson, a supportive brother, and an invaluable member of our community. His commitment to service shines brightly through his active involvement in his church, where he serves as a bishop, a role that demands compassion, wisdom, and a deep understanding of people.

It is truly inspiring to see how Wilson has diligently pursued and achieved the goals he has set for himself. This speaks volumes about his dedication, perseverance, and his ability to translate vision into reality.

Beyond his personal and community accomplishments, Wilson possesses the crucial qualities necessary for a family court judge. He has a strong grasp of the law, a keen sense of fairness, and a profound capacity for compassion and empathy. These are not just abstract traits; they are evident in the way he interacts with others, the thoughtful counsel he provides, and the unwavering commitment he shows to understanding different perspectives.

Without reservation, I believe Wilson A. Unga is an excellent choice for Family Court Judge. His life experiences, his character, and his inherent understanding of justice and human nature make him exceptionally well-suited to serve in this important role. I urge you to confirm his nomination.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:21:33 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Winnifred Ngatuvai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Greetings,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. As a longtime resident of Laie, who now resides on the mainland, I have known Wilson since birth. I and many others have witnessed Wilson’s growth as he has excelled in his academic and professional pursuits. An article “Academic All Stars” published Feb. 7, 2002, on Hawaii News Now, stated “Students like Wilson are Hawaii’s most valuable commodity, kids who value their education. College will be the gateway to better things. Some don’t have yet a clear idea what they want to study, and some do.” Wilson clearly knew then, what he wanted to do, and has stayed true to his desire to understand the law, know it, and defend it in court. As a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Wilson has gained valuable experience and understanding of the law, as a prior Domestic Violence Felony Team Captain, and currently as Felony Trials Division Chief. Wilson was a recipient of the Mayor’s Award for Exceptional Achievement. He was also a Pacific Century Fellow.

As a child of immigrants, of Tongan and Samoan heritage, who is proficient in Japanese, Wilson has a valuable understanding of Pacific Islander and Asian cultures. Wilson is actively engaged in his community as Chair for the Lumana’I Scholarship, a mentor for youth at his church and high school, and as a Bishop. Wilson’s blend of cultural competence and community involvement provide valuable insight into the challenges faced by those he serves. This allows him to be culturally sensitive, empathetic, and compassionate, while being impartial and fair.

I wholeheartedly support Wilson Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. He possesses the legal expertise, cultural competence, and practical skills needed to effectively serve the people of the First Circuit.

Respectfully,

Winnifred Ngatuvai

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:24:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tui Niutupuivaha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

My name is Tui Niutupuivaha and I've known Wilson for over a decade now. We're from the same community and we serve together in our church. Wilson is a respected member of our community. During the time I have known Wilson, I have had the opportunity to observe his personal and professional behavior. A few of his most admirable qualities that stand out is that he is compassionate, kind and honest.

Wilson is a great father and husband. His family is important to him and he understands what it takes to be a great father and husband. His ability to create an environment where the children can flourish is one of those things he is great at. He is selfless and works on his relationship with his wife and children daily.

Wilson deserves and has earned the right to be a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. All people will greatly benefit from him in this capacity and our community will be better for it.

Sincerely

Tu'i Niutupuivaha

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:46:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Keil	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in strong support of Wilson Unga, a judicial nominee for the District and Family Courts of the First Circuit Court.

Wilson's the man! I've seen him interact with the community on several occasions. One situation that stands out to me was on a hot Sunday afternoon. For several years, Wilson and I were entrusted with taking sacred tithing funds from our local congregation every Sunday to the bank for the night drop. On our way to one of those tithing drops, we saw a couple on the side of Kamehameha Highway with a sign indicating they needed help with some car trouble. We stopped and chatted with the couple for a minute, told them we'd come back with some tools after changing out of our Sunday clothes, and see if we could be useful. The couple looked like they had a rough night sleeping in their car because someone had slashed their tires. To be straight up, they were chronics. They were shocked, apparently, that we returned to help, as several cars had already stopped and then carried on. Our wives had sent some food and water to share with them, and they ate as we attempted to fix their tire. While the sun literally beat down on our heads in the summer heat, Wilson had that big smile on his face the whole time. He was not looking for a pat on the back, but was a concerned citizen wanting to serve his fellow man.

“When ye are in the [service](#) of your [fellow](#) beings ye are only in the service of your God.”

Alan F. Keil

TRISHA Y. NAKAMURA

P.O. Box 61619, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96839 • trishanakamura@gmail.com

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
Date: April 21, 2025 Hrg: April 23, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.
Re: JC 30; Strong Support for the Nomination of Wilson A. Unga to District Family Court

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Wilson A. Unga regarding his nomination as Judge of the District Family Court of the First Circuit (“Family Court”).¹ I came to know Wilson during my time as a Deputy Public Defender when he was in the role of opposing counsel as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney. After, when I asked for him to speak with law students at the William S. Richardson School of Law, he never hesitated to step up to serve.

Simply put, Wilson A. Unga will be a great Family Court Judge. He has the highest standards and commitment to his work and the law. I cannot think of a time when I did not trust Wilson to be candid, follow the rules required of attorneys, and work with civility—even though we were opposing counsel. Wilson put his obligation to uphold the Constitution and his commitment to the practice above any mere “win.” When trying to negotiate a plea agreement or argue sentencing, Wilson operated from a place of fairness and what I believe to be a deeper sense of duty to our communities.

Wilson’s bright light will be one of the gifts he can offer to Family Court. I have no doubt that Wilson is positioned to take on the challenging and important work at Family Court to make hard decisions in the best interests of children, to follow the standards set to ensure fair distribution of marital assets, and to rule on temporary restraining orders and criminal matters. His experiences as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney and work in real estate will both inform his role as a judge.

The attorneys who will appear before him—and the people whose family matters are before him will be in the hands of someone who cares deeply about people and fairness.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Wilson A. Unga as Judge of the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

¹ This testimony is submitted in my personal capacity.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:53:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Salote Mannering	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 19, 2025

Aloha Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Salote Mannering and I had the opportunity to volunteer together with Wilson ‘Unga in teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to children ages 4 to 11 for over 5 years. I am grateful for this opportunity to write a testimony about this good man Wilson ‘Unga.

He is a man of integrity who is honest in his dealings with others and most importantly with God.

Wilson is a great listener when children have questions and very fair & and respectful in his judgement. He allows children to share their point of views and then correct them if needed so they can learn.

Wilson is a great family man and loves his wife and children and extended families. He has great family values which will add to the many experiences he has as an attorney to be an outstanding judge.

I would like to support the confirmation of Mr. Wilson ‘Unga as a Family Court Judge. He will make a great judge and will be a great asset to our community and to the families of our island.

Respectfully Yours,

Salote Mannering

April 21, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Conference Room 225
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee:

Please find this letter in strong support of Wilson Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I had the pleasure of supervising him when he joined the Felony Trials Division at the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu. He was everything you would want from a young attorney: smart, organized, diligent, with a great attitude. He was receptive to constructive criticism and blossomed into a dependable deputy prosecutor who could be trusted with the most serious cases that make the news. In other words, he has the requisite diligence and ability to handle a change of scenery in a different area of law.

I have seen him in court countless times over the years and can attest to his ability to remain calm under all circumstances, whether it was dealing with hostile witnesses, opposing counsel, or adverse rulings. I have no doubt his steady temperament will prevail when tested in Family Court.

Finally, Wilson represents a community that is underrepresented. He is a local boy from the North Shore and still lives in his community, making the long drive into town every morning. He has found a way to balance his work as the Trials Division Chief while making time for his family. For all that he has achieved, he does it with grace and humility. Wilson passes the eyeball test, checks all of the boxes, and will make a fine addition to the Judiciary. Please move his nomination forward.

Sincerely,

/s/ Adrian Dhakhwa

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 12:31:32 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keone Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I write to you today to strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. As a personal friend and member of our Honolulu community, I have known Wilson for the better part of 15 years. We have surfed together, served in our church alongside each other, and seen our families grow together. I can attest to the remarkable depth of his character, his unwavering commitment to justice, and the profound respect he commands from colleagues and constituents.

Wilson Unga is a jurist of rare caliber. His professional record reflects not only a mastery of the law but a deep understanding of the people it serves. As a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Wilson has consistently demonstrated a commitment to fairness, integrity, and the constitutional principles that form the backbone of our legal system. His ability to apply the law with wisdom and balance, particularly in complex and high-stakes cases, speaks volumes about his legal acumen and judicial temperament.

What sets Wilson apart is not just his experience, but the trust he has earned across a broad spectrum of the community. He is deeply engaged in civic life and has long championed efforts to make the justice system more accessible and equitable. From mentoring youth in his Kahuku community to advocating for underserved Pacific island populations, his service extends far beyond the courtroom. His empathy, humility, and steady leadership make him a pillar of our community and an exemplar of public service.

The people who know Wilson Unga—those who have stood before him in court, worked alongside him in public service or received his counsel—know him to be a man of honesty, fairness, and exceptional integrity. These are the exact qualities we must demand of those who interpret and uphold our laws.

In a time when faith in institutions can feel fragile, Wilson Unga represents the kind of principled, even-handed leadership that restores trust. I have no doubt he will serve with distinction and bring honor to the bench.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to confirm Wilson Unga's nomination and allow him to continue his service to the public at the highest level because he is an honest man; which can be a rare attribute to find in this day and age.

Respectfully,

S. Keone Young, DNP, APRN-Rx, FNP-BC

TESTIMONY OF
ALEN M. K. KANESHIRO, ATTORNEY AT LAW
TO THE
SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
ON
April 23, 2024, 9:15 A.M.

RE: JC30

SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION FOR JUDICIAL APPOINTEE
WILSON A. UNGA

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am submitting the following testimony in support for District Family Judicial Appointee Wilson A. Unga.

I have known Mr. Unga for approximately 13 years, first, when he was a law clerk at the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, and later as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu.

Over the past ten years, I have had a significant amount of contact with Mr. Unga. A majority of that time as opposing counsel. As a criminal defense attorney, it is not always easy to express support for a career prosecutor becoming a judge. However, despite the adversarial nature of our relationship, I believe Mr. Unga to be imminently qualified to be a District Family Court Judge. Mr. Unga is practical, reasonable, and intelligent. He has a calm and reassuring demeanor.

I know that Mr. Unga deeply cares for his community and family, which I believe are qualities that will make him an excellent District Family Court Judge.

I have no reservations in saying that Wilson A. Unga is qualified to serve as District Family Court Judge.

I respectfully urge your support for confirmation of Judicial Appointee Wilson A. Unga.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 6:32:38 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Michele Nakayama, and I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have known Wilson as a young man, since he is the same age as my oldest son. I have witnessed how he has grown up into the person he is at this time. Wilson comes from a very loving family, who has helped and supported him throughout his life.

Wilson has been the type of person who strives to do his very best and willingly helps his family, friends, and community. He is also a loving and supportive husband and father to his wife Sunny and three daughters. Wilson has also showed how much he loves his parents and sister.

Recently, I have seen Wilson demonstrate love and empathy to a very close friend of ours who recently has lost her son. As he represented our work community, friends and family, as a Bishop in our Church, he showed love for her and her son, as well as to his wife and family. As he gave words of wisdom, sympathy, empathy, you could feel his advice was genuine and came from love, since he grew up with her son and worked with her as a youth.

Wilson will be a great asset as a Family Judge, through his years of experience in all that he has accomplished will come forth and be helpful in this capacity. Wilson is a responsible, supportive, willing to do the hard work, show empathy and be the leader that is needed in this new role. He will also be the role model for all of his family members, friends and in our community as he continues to grow within his duties at work and given the opportunity to serve as a Family Court Judge.

I truly support Wilson A. Unga in this capacity as a Family Court Judge in the First Circuit. Thank you for this opportunity to share my testimony.

Mahalo me ke pumehana,

Michele Nakayama



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April 22, 2025

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: **JC30, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as District Family Judge of
the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee *WILSON A. UNGA***

Hearing: Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conf. Rm. 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senator Chang, Senator San Buenaventura and Senator Awa,

I strongly support the appointment of Wilson A. Unga to the position of District Family Judge of the First Circuit. Mr. Unga is a dedicated public servant who, throughout his time as a Deputy Prosecutor, has shown the utmost respect for the law, our community, and the clients I represent as a defense attorney. He is smart, hardworking and kind, all qualities he will draw on for this position as a Family Court judge.

I first met Mr. Unga when he joined the felony division of the prosecutor's office in 2014. I was practicing as a Deputy Public Defender at the time and had the pleasure of appearing against Mr. Unga in various cases. We conducted a trial against each other about 10 years ago, and I distinctly recall being very impressed with his skill, composure and competence in one of his first felony jury trials. He was well-prepared and treated my client with kindness. The collective opinion of the Public Defender's office was that he was well on his way to being a great prosecutor, and he has proven himself time and time again over the years. It came as no surprise to any of us that he rose to the rank of Felony Trials Division Chief in 2023. It was a well-deserved promotion, and he was the perfect person to lead the litigation and administrative activities for all felony prosecutors of the Honolulu Prosecutor's office.

I look forward to him joining the Family Court bench. He will bring his strong work ethic, fairness and practicality to a calendar that deals with the many crises families face in the legal

system. I trust that he will approach these cases with the care and compassion that they require. Coupled with his extensive trial and courtroom experience, I have no doubt that he will successfully transition to his new role. For these reasons, I firmly support Mr. Unga's appointment to the position of District Family Judge of the First Circuit and look forward to the many contributions he will make to our community as a jurist.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Crystal K. Glendon', written in a cursive style.

Crystal K. Glendon

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:01:39 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Meliam Siulua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 22, 2025

Re: Strong Support for the Confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as Family Court Judge, First Circuit

To Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

I write to express my **strong and unequivocal support** for the confirmation of **Wilson A. Unga** to serve as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga brings to the bench not only an impressive legal background, but a deep, demonstrated commitment to the well-being of Hawaii’s families. Throughout his career, he has earned the respect of colleagues, clients, and community members for his integrity, fairness, and compassion—traits that are essential in Family Court, where the issues at hand often affect the most vulnerable among us.

His legal acumen is matched by his cultural competency and emotional intelligence. He understands the unique dynamics of Hawaii’s diverse communities and consistently approaches sensitive matters with humility and insight. His presence on the bench would help ensure that every family who comes before the court is treated with dignity and empathy.

Wilson A. Unga is more than qualified—he is exactly the kind of judge our Family Court system needs: thoughtful, principled, and deeply rooted in service. I respectfully urge this Committee to confirm his appointment without hesitation.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in strong support of Mr. Unga’s confirmation.

Sincerely,
Meliam Siulua

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:07:35 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susiane Manning	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 22, 2025

Re: Testimony in Strong Support of Wilson A. Unga – Family Court Judge, First Circuit

To Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to offer my **strongest support** for the confirmation of **Wilson A. Unga** as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

In a role that demands both compassion and sound judgment, Mr. Unga stands out as a person of **exceptional honesty, unwavering ethics, and deep personal integrity**. These are not just words I use lightly—his reputation has been built on consistently doing what is right, even when it is difficult or unpopular.

Mr. Unga’s ethical compass has been evident throughout his legal career. Whether advocating for families in crisis or mentoring young attorneys, he leads by example—calm, thoughtful, and transparent in every interaction. I have every confidence that he will bring the same high standard of integrity to the bench, where decisions must be made not only with legal precision, but also with moral clarity.

The Family Court handles some of the most sensitive and emotionally charged cases in our justice system. It requires a judge who not only knows the law but also lives the values of fairness, honesty, and compassion. Wilson Unga is that judge.

I respectfully urge the Committee to confirm his nomination. The people of Hawaii will be well served by a judge of such strong ethical foundation and personal character.

Sincerely,

Susiane Manning, LCSW

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:26:41 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Wilson is meant to be a judge.

I had the pleasure of having Wilson as my division chief when working as a deputy prosecutor for the City and County of Honolulu. As a division chief, Wilson showed incredible depth of legal knowledge, dedication to public service and justice, and such patience and kindness to his deputies.

Wilson always had time for deputies to discuss cases no matter how busy he was. In fact, talking to Wilson was always so helpful to a panicking novice deputy, such as myself, facing felony trials that I referred meetings with Wilson as “therapy session” jokingly. He is so smart and can grasp the most complex legal issues with ease, and better yet, he can explain those complex issues in simple terms to other people who may not have his level of intelligence.

Wilson truly embodies the ideal judicial temperament: reasonable, calm, humble, even kneeled, and hard working. I never once saw him raise voices even in the most stressful situations. He is an incredible attorney and, better yet, a genuinely wonderful person.

The State of Hawaii will benefit tremendously with Wilson as a judge.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my strong support.

Michelle “Mishelle” Kim

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:35:34 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loren Haugen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am respectfully submitting my testimony in support of District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee Wilson A. Unga (Appointee Unga). In the ten (10) plus years that I have known Appointee Unga, I have always found him to be extremely competent and levelheaded when making any type of legal decision. Appointee Unga possesses the necessary legal knowledge and experience to fill this role as a representative of this state's judiciary. I have known Appointee Unga while serving alongside him as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney here in Honolulu. Separate from his legal work, Appointee Unga has never been known to sit still, he obtained his realtor license a few years back, and before that was a Pacific Century Fellow. It is fitting to see Appointee Unga being considered as a District Court Family Judge as I have personally seen him both as a loving husband to his wife, and as a mentor and parent to his three daughters, who swim and participate in gymnastics among other endeavors he miraculously finds the time for. I can state without reservation Appointee Unga's commitment to his spiritual beliefs, work ethic, and sense of family will serve our community greatly for years to come. These separate and distinct experiences will be what Appointee Unga will draw from, to be a sensible and capable District Family Court of the First Circuit Judge.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:50:39 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carissa Tafuna	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. He is a good family man that serves actively in our community. I have witnessed this firsthand and I believe he would be a fair and compassionate judge.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:05:45 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amanda Leonard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 22, 2025

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: JC 30, TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF NOMINATION OF WILSON A. UNGA

HEARING: Wednesday, 9:15 A.M., Conference Room 225

Dear Distinguished Senators,

Please accept this letter of enthusiastic support for the judicial appointment of Wilson A. Unga for District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I have known Mr. Unga since 2008 when we attended the William S. Richardson School of Law together as classmates to the present day in my position as Statewide Coordinator of the Missing Child Center Hawai'i (MCCH) in the Department of the Attorney General. I have served as a child protection professional in Hawai'i for over 20 years, including 13 years as a licensed attorney, and practiced Family Law for 6 years.

Mr. Unga is a highly respected, award-winning prosecutor who has devoted his life's work to public service in Hawai'i. In his long and impressive career at Honolulu Prosecutor's Office, he serves the people of O'ahu with tremendous honor, leadership, integrity and humility. He has earned himself an outstanding reputation for being a strong and effective advocate for victims of crime, including horrific domestic violence and child abuse. Because I am responsible for coordinating law enforcement efforts to protect endangered children, I am well aware of Mr. Unga's impressive work and collaboration with county, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the courts, victim service providers and other community stakeholders. His leadership continues to strengthen the community and law enforcement as a whole and ensure justice and healing for so many deserving victims.

Not only does Mr. Unga possess a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the court systems and processes but, as a hardworking father himself, he can relate to and connect with people on a practical and human level. He has the right balance of objectivity and sincere

compassion. He has the appropriate judicial temperament to administer the law. He would make decisions that are just and fair. He is unbiased and impartial. He is an excellent and effective communicator and uniter. He is a leader, mentor and role model who would undoubtedly make a lasting positive impact on court-involved individuals, families and children.

Mr. Unga has all of the credentials, experience, knowledge, work ethic and passion to be an exemplary judge and would be a huge asset to the District Family Court and the State of Hawai'i. Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments.

Respectfully yours,

Amanda Leonard

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:06:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pakela Akaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the appointed committee,

I strongly support Wilson Unga as a candidate for he District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege to know Wilson through mutual friends for years before getting the opportunity to know him first hand as we paddled together to Lahui o Koolauloa. Wilson is a family man with strong morals and the conviction to see things through. What stands out the most to me is that despite the work he is involved with, often being exposed to what I imagine to be an exhausting/draining side to negative human nature, he is able to maintain his positive and friendly demeanor and always strives to lift and lead others. I believe Wilson contributes the type of character and perspective that will serve the state well should be he appointed.

Mahalo!

Pakela Akaka

April 21, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawaii State Senate
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: April 23, 2025, Testimony in Support of Wilson A. Unga's Appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Aloha Chair Roads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I have been a resident of the Kahuku community for 35 years and have had the opportunity to observe Wilson A. Unga's involvement in the community and their professional capabilities.

I have known Wilson A. Unga in my capacity as a Kahuku Community Association member for five years and board director for two years. During this time, I have been impressed by his integrity and moral standards demonstrated throughout his professional and personal life. Wilson A. Unga is compassionate and has a genuine concern for the well-being of families and children. He operates with fairness and has a proven track record of impartiality and a commitment to justice. He has a calm, patient, and respectful demeanor even in highly emotional situations. Wilson A. Unga's legal acumen combined with his experience serving as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the City and County of Honolulu, makes him exceptionally qualified for this position.

In my experience, Wilson A. Unga has consistently shown a dedication to uplifting families in the Kahuku community. For example, we had an Easter Egg Hunt, Movie Night, and Arbor Day at Kahuku Elementary School where Wilson A. Unga supported these events and built trust with the community using a culturally sensitive approach.

The Family Court plays a vital role in our community, addressing sensitive and complex issues that have a profound impact on people's lives. I believe that Wilson A Unga's qualifications, experience, and character make him an ideal candidate to serve in this position. He has the knowledge, skills, and compassion to handle the challenges of Family Court with wisdom and empathy.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate to confirm Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Tatiana Santiago

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:12:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kari Akaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I have known Wilson for almost 30 years now first as a kind neighbor, then as a brotherly schoolmate, and now an outstanding friend. My brother and I are one year apart and lived up the street from Wilson and his sister, who are the same ages as us. As young children, we grew up visiting each other's houses, playing games together and experiencing the same dynamics of sibling tendencies. As we continued to grow, we attended school together, worked together, worshipped together and had overlapping extracurricular activities. Wilson continuously stood out in my mind as a highly intelligent, devout, caring, and fun loving person who always aspired to achieve his goals. He has also been very skilled and talented in many aspects of life from communication while in speech and debate and musicality in marching band. As we have become adults, I have seen him as a loving father and husband. He stands close to his family and cares for them dearly in all that he does. I have no doubt that he will make an outstanding Family Court Judge.

Mahalo,

Kari Akaka

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:12:59 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aaron Melaas	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am submitting this testimony in support of judicial appointee Wilson A. Unga's confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Wilson personally for over 20 years, having attended Georgetown University together as undergraduates starting in 2002 and later spending a year as roommates. Having maintained a friendship since that time, I know Wilson to be a person of tremendous integrity who is very committed to public service. He has always enthusiastically pursued opportunities to serve, having interned with two members of the U.S. House of Representatives during our time together in Washington, DC, and earning his law degree and joining the Prosecuting Attorney's Office after returning to Hawai'i. As Wilson and I have continued communicating over the past several years, he has always spoken well of his experience, and when we last had the opportunity to spend time together in person at his home in Kahuku in 2022, it was a delight to see how well he and his family are doing as well as to hear how optimistic he was about his future career in public service.

As he approaches the next step in his life and career, I am very confident that Wilson will be an excellent judge. He is not only clearly committed to serving his community, but as an excellent father and husband, I know that he will bring great seriousness of purpose to the specific cases brought before him in family court. I am very proud to call him a friend and particularly proud to see him earn this honor.

Sincerely,

Aaron Melaas

2831 Arizona Ave Apt B

Santa Monica, CA 90404

Tel: +1-248-343-9283

LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:23:01 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
KALOLINA VAIMOUI	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit. I am writing to you on behalf of my nephew Wilson Unga. Wilson is the son of my cousin Pita Unga and I've had the honor to watch him grow into the man he is today.

Wilson has been an example for my kids and has always shown what hard work and dedication is when it comes to school, family, and always lending a helping hand. Being a single mother of 6 children and trying to encourage each one of them to continue in education this was not an easy task. Wilson showed exactly what education can do and what it entails to accomplish such goals.

Family has always been instrumental and has been the pillar of all things possible. Wilson is not only a nephew, he is a husband and father. All of which is a full time job. To see Wilson graduate high school, college, and admitted to the Hawaii State Bar in 2012 all the while growing his family shows the type of person Wilson is educated, respectful, humble, giving, and always willing to lend a helping hand.

I wanted to express my unwavering support for Wilson. I know he will fulfill his duties as a judge as he has prepared for this opportunity throughout his career. Please consider this letter and thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Kalolina Vaimoui

LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 9:51:54 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacquelyn Esser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in **strong support** of Wilson Unga's nomination to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. I have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Unga, always as opposing counsel, and I have consistently found him to be straightforward, honest, diligent, and respectful - even in the most challenging cases.

Mr. Unga brings a steady presence, a kind demeanor, and a deep sense of fairness that will serve the Family Court well. I have always appreciated his professionalism and approachability, and I am truly pleased to see him nominated for this important role.

Wilson Unga will make an outstanding judge, and I offer my full support for his appointment.

LATE

I was born in Tonga raised in American Samoa and there's 13 of us.

My dad every now and then remind us of his vision and dream of bringing us to America in search of a better future and opportunities.

We had our own struggles and challenges as a big family trying to survive and adapt here but my parents set the pace by working very hard. I took on that mentality and work hard all my life. Wilson being my firstborn was taught and raised with the value of hard work. His ambitious mind and drive to be engaged in so many pursuits at school, in the community, and church let me to at times work two full time jobs and side jobs too to afford his expenses. It was very rewarding to watch my investment bear fruits as he progressed and develop. I saw his confidence escalate as he competed in the state speech and debate and continued to Washington DC to represent our state in the national arena.

His hard work ethics let him to graduate from Boy Scout as an Eagle and enjoyed helping many others achieve their badges and become Eagle Scout too. He took our State to National competition in History Day and our living room was their practice venue.

As a High he was always engaged in leadership roles the only Tuba player of Kahuku marching band, jazz band and Student Body President and graduate as a Valedictorian of his class of 2002. He has participated in two foreign country study abroad venture one to England in Cambridge University and Ecuador. Wilson is multilingual he speaks Japanese, Spanish besides English and some Tongan and Samoans.

He has amazing leadership skills and is not afraid to step out of his comfort zone to steer and lead certain projects. While in Georgetown University he builds up the Polynesian Club to be the biggest Polynesian show college level of the East Coast. He instilled a love and appreciation of Poly dance and Luau concept of dining in the diverse ethnic group. A memorable experience because I was there with the Ti Leaves and Lihing Mui powder to add an Island touch to the Pineapple. He's a powerful connect as he served and negotiated in his different role working with Hirono, Abercrombie, Eni Hunkin, Congress Rep from Am. Samoa, trained under the leadership of Justice Pollock. Currently working with Mufi Hannemann in the Pacific Century Fellowship.

He's the Chairperson for the Samoa Lumana'i Scholarship program a former recipient of the scholarship himself with Justice To'oto'o, Uale as his mentor.

The saying "Where much is given much is expected" is symbolic in Wilson's endeavors. He excelled in many arenas not because he is a solo survivor but he networks and looks to people to mentor him. All his life has been preparatory for the judge position. He is the one for the job and you will not get it because he is willing to serve and will give his all like he always does. May God bless all of us.

LATE

April 22, 2025

TO: The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Daisy Hartsfield

SUBJECT: Consideration and Confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee, WILSON A. UNGA

Hearing: April 23, 2025, 9:15 AM, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT:

I am the Social Services Division Administrator with the State of Hawai`i, Department of Human Services but submit this individual testimony as a private citizen.

I met WILSON A. UNGA (DPA Unga), when he was a deputy that just started in the Honolulu Prosecutor's Office. Through the years, he has not changed much – he continues to be hardworking, smart, and courageous.

When I practiced law, I made many appearances in various hearings in Family Court, before several Family Court judges. It was always interesting to see how **who** the judge was in a case because from the moment my client first walked into the courtroom, that first impression of the judge influenced the outcome of the case. From a client's perspective, having a judge they could connect with, and relate to, made a difference to them, especially when my clients were youth who were navigating the challenges of adolescence.

Unlike other courts, most Family Court cases are confidential, and decisions are not made by a jury of peers but by one person – the judge. For youth that appear in Family Court, a judge has a profound influence over their future. What a judge says to youth often "sticks" with them for the rest of their lives. DPA Unga will be a judge who is a great role model for youth that appear in Family Court and his life experience is a tool available only to him. That is what sets him apart from others and makes him a commodity to Family Court. While DPA Unga's resume validates he has the merits for becoming a judge, his upbringing in the Tongan-Samoan culture will bring more diversity to a bench that serves a multi-cultural community. His influence will go beyond the courtroom and that's what great judges will do, touch the hearts of those that appear before them so that they walk away from the judicial system better than when they entered it.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in strong support of WILSON A. UNGA for consideration and confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit. He will be a judge that will make a positive difference to many, for years to come.

LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 3:24:30 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nina Ki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am very proud to submit this testimony in support of Wilson Unga for his judicial confirmation. It was a pleasure to work with him as a former law clerk for the Honorable Judge To'oto'o, as he always advocated for justice and fairness. His integrity and aloha for the people of Hawai'i will be an amazing asset for the Judicial branch.

LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 3:31:04 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Haaheo Kahoohalahala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 22, 2025

To: Senate Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
Governor of the State of Hawai'i
Hawai'i State Capitol

Submitted via website

RE: SUPPORT FOR CONFIRMATION OF WILSON UNGA, FOR JUDGE, DISTRICT COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT

I have known Wilson Unga since first attending law school in 2011. While at law school I worked with Mr. Unga as editors of the Asian Pacific Law and Policy Journal. Although we currently work on different islands and for different counties, I have stayed in contact with and have conferred with him as a deputy prosecutors regarding legal issues. He is a very skilled and experienced attorney and works hard to advocate for victims and for a safer community. Wilson has always worked with the upmost diligence and commitment as a service leader and is fair and ethical both in and out of court. He has always treated others with professionalism and courtesy. I have no doubt that his experience, professionalism and demeanor will allow him to fulfill the responsibilities and duties of a First Circuit District Court Judge.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ha'aheo M. Kaho'ohalahala

April 21, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawaii State Senate
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: JC30, Testimony in Strong Support of Wilson A. Unga's Appointment to the District Family Court of the First Circuit

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

My name is Fifita Unga, and I am Wilson's mother and also his best friend. I grew up in a small village in Tonga in a humble home with meager means. My father rode a horse for transportation and drove a chariot pulled by a horse. He worked tirelessly to provide for our family. He sold copra for a living which is a very physically demanding job. He collected coconuts, husking and splitting them open, dried them in the sun or roasted them in the oven, all by hand and barefoot. He also fished at night to feed us and farmed during the day.

One of his constant but valuable counsel to me was, "Fifita, your passport out of here is education." I took that to heart. I carried that message with me across the ocean when I immigrated to Hawai'i to pursue higher education. Not just for myself, but for the hope of a better life for my family. This same message guided how I raised Wilson.

My husband and I did everything we could to support Wilson's education and his educational pursuits. We gave whatever we could give. My husband worked two full-time jobs, along with side jobs, for many years to support our children and family. We stood behind our son every step of the way, believing in his potential and watching him fulfill it with hard work and determination. He went on to Georgetown University and then came home to earn his Juris Doctor and MBA from the University of Hawaii.

For over a decade, Wilson served in the Prosecutor's Office and we watched him handle some of the most serious felony cases, including domestic violence and homicide. Through it all, he remained grounded in integrity and fairness, and he worked hard to ensure justice was served with compassion. Wilson does his best all the time. It's in his DNA, forward and always '*ki he lelei taha*' which means toward what is good and right. He is successful, yet humble, and he strives to help the less fortunate find their own success. His time in the Prosecutor's Office sharpened not only his legal skills but also his deep sense of fairness and compassion, especially for those who are most vulnerable. He has always had a strong commitment to justice and has earned a reputation for being competent, professional, and respectful of his roots and those who came before him.

I'm often intrigued by his diverse interests, but I believe they help keep him balanced. His love for the ocean, perhaps an inherited trait from our cultural heritage, is a healing and therapeutic outlet for him. He enjoys canoe paddling, surfing, and swimming. He's also a health-conscious person, always jogging, going to the gym, and eating healthy. He lives with real discipline.

Faith in God is also central to Wilson's life. As a young man, he served a two-year mission in Japan, rising to leadership positions such as trainer, zone leader, Assistant to the Mission President. Since then, he's remained active in church service, holding roles such as Elders Quorum President, Sunday School President, Counselor in the bishopric, and now serving as a Bishop for the young single adults at Brigham Young University, Hawai'i.

Wilson's decision to return home to Hawai'i was one of his best. He carries a grateful heart for his people, his heritage, and the opportunities he's been blessed with. He feels a deep desire to give back. We believe that his lived experiences, from our humble beginnings, to his dedication to public service, grounded in faith and cultural values, have shaped him into someone uniquely prepared for this role.

He leads a God-centered life and understands that true leadership comes with humility, courage, and love for the people he serves. I know Wilson will serve the Family Court and our community with integrity, wisdom, and compassion. Thank you for allowing me to share my heart and support for my son.

With much gratitude,

Fifita Unga

LATE

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

20th April 2025

RE: Reference Letter for Mr. Wilson 'Unga

Dear Chair & Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am honored to provide this character reference for Mr. Wilson A. 'Unga. While I have not had the opportunity to meet him in person, I am well aware of his strong reputation as a dedicated professional, a person of integrity, and a respected member of the community.

Through my interactions with mutual acquaintances and my awareness of his contributions to his profession and community, I have come to understand that Mr. 'Unga is widely regarded for his honesty, fairness, and unwavering commitment to service. He is known for his leadership qualities, sound judgment, and ability to approach challenges with wisdom and integrity.

His dedication to public service, strong ethical principles, and ability to engage with people from all walks of life make him highly suited for a position of responsibility and trust. Based on his reputation and the high regard in which he is held, I am confident that he will perform his duties with excellence and fairness.

Should you require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at +676 7744496 or vika.unga@gmail.com.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly endorse Mr. Wilson A. 'Unga for this role.

Sincerely,

Vika Martinez



Vika.unga@gmail.com



VIKA MARTINEZ

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER FOR
TONGA FIRE & EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 4:42:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

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

Comments:

Testimony Submitted by Jared Higashi,
VP, Government & Community Affairs
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

Wednesday, April 23, 2025
Senate Committee on Judiciary

JC30 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit, Judicial Appointee, WILSON A. UNGA

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Judicial Appointee Wilson A. Unga and his confirmation to the District Family Court of the First Circuit for a term to expire in six years.

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Wilson personally as a fellow member of the Pacific Century Fellows program. Throughout our time in the cohort, I was consistently impressed by his thoughtful demeanor, his compassionate and understanding nature, and his incredible intellect. He listens with empathy, speaks with intention, and acts with integrity—traits that are essential for a judge serving in our Family Court system.

Wilson is someone I have the utmost respect for, both personally and professionally. His commitment to justice and his calm, fair-minded approach to complex issues will undoubtedly make him an outstanding addition to the bench.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of his confirmation.

LATE

17 April 2025

Dear Mr. Recktendwald,

RE: JC 30 – Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. Unga for District Family Judge, First Circuit

I am pleased to provide this character reference for Mr. Wilson A. 'Unga, whom I have known for over two years as a family member. During my time at Brigham Young University from 2011 to 2013, I had the opportunity to interact with him frequently at family gatherings and reunions.

Throughout my acquaintance with Mr. 'Unga, he has consistently demonstrated exceptional qualities, including diligence, honesty, compassion, self-discipline, patience, tolerance, and fairness. His strong commitment to his family, dedication to his church callings, and service to the nation reflect his integrity and kind-hearted nature.

Based on my personal experiences and observations, I am confident that Mr. 'Unga possesses the character, professionalism, and moral judgment required to excel in any responsibility entrusted to him, including serving as a judge.

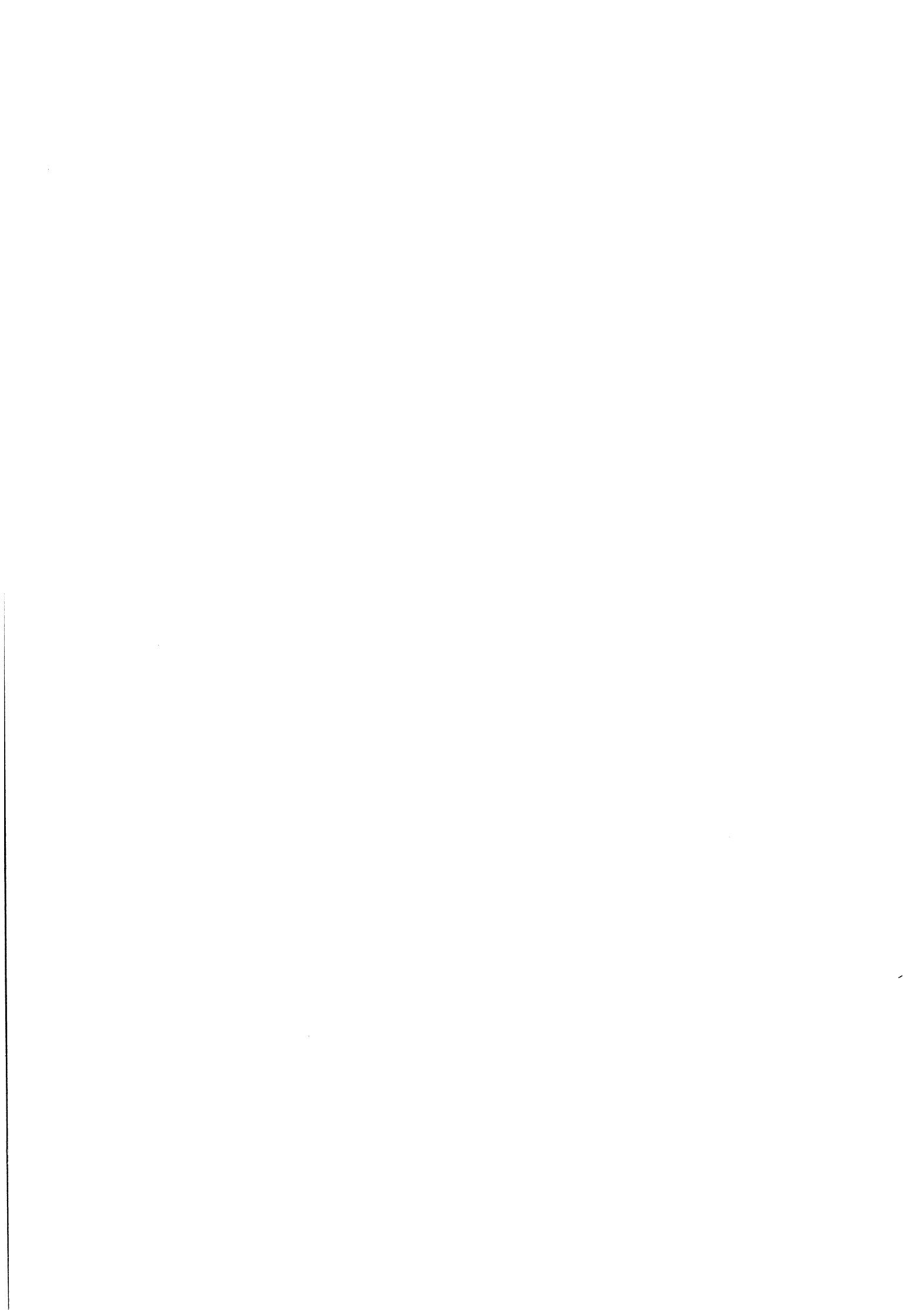
Please do not hesitate to contact me at (676) 774-3978 or s.unga@reservebank.to if you require any further information or clarification.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I wholeheartedly endorse Mr. Wilson A. 'Unga for this esteemed role.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Selai 'Unga Moala
Senior Non-Banking Examiner
National Reserve Bank of Tonga



LATE

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/23/2025 1:14:48 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ina Taea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A Unga as a family court judge of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson A Unga for many years and I can confidently say that he exemplifies the highest standards of integrity, grace, and kindness.

Raised by exceptional parents and embedded in a community that values honesty and respect, Wilson A Unga has grown into an honorable man of impeccable character. His moral compass is unwavering, always seeking what is just and right, not only in his personal life but also in his interactions with others. Wilson's genuine kindness and graciousness leave a lasting impact on everyone he meets, and his humble nature is a testament to the values instilled in him by his family & village.

In addition to his strong character, Wilson has always demonstrated a profound sense of obedience to the law and a respect for the rules that govern our society. He has shown a remarkable ability to analyze complex situations, remaining objective and fair-minded, which are essential qualities for anyone in the judicial profession. His decision-making process reflects both thoughtfulness and a deep commitment to justice.

I have no doubt that Wilson A Unga will bring these qualities with him into the judicial role. He has the personal and professional qualities necessary to serve with distinction and make a positive impact in any legal position. His integrity, intellect, and strong moral grounding make him an exceptional candidate for this position.

I wholeheartedly support Wilson Unga in his pursuit of this position and am confident that he will serve with the utmost dedication and honor.

Sincerely,

Ina Taea



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

Wilson A. Unga
District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit (JC30)

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

FROM: Mark M. Murakami
President, Hawaii State Bar Association

Hearing: Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 9:15 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 JC 30, Nomination of Wilson A. Unga for the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

After a rigorous process, described below, the HSBA Board of Directors concluded that Mr. Unga is **QUALIFIED**. Mr. Unga has considerable experience in the public sector as a Deputy Prosecutor and Supervising Deputy Prosecutor. His background details his commitment to public service, his dedication to the rule of law, and his strong commitment to his community.

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.
- Mr. Unga submitted documentation, which 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 Mr. Unga in all categories of the HSBA criteria, which include Integrity, Diligence, Legal knowledge and ability, Professional experience, Temperament, Financial responsibility,

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Public service, and Ability to fulfill the responsibilities and duties of the position.

- The Executive Director and I met with Mr. Unga on April 17, 2025, to discuss the subcommittee's findings.
- On April 21, 2025, the HSBA Board of Directors interviewed Mr. Unga in executive session.
- The HSBA Board deliberated and voted that Mr. Unga was qualified.

Thank you for your time and allowing the HSBA to share our process and determination of qualification.