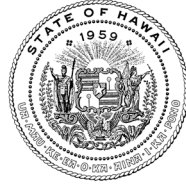


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

March 27, 2026

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

Date: Friday, March 27, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Place: Conference Room 016, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: G.M. 674, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Civil Rights Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, ALPHONSO BRAGGS, for a term to expire 06-30-2029.

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations **strongly supports** the confirmation of Alphonso Braggs to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

Mr. Braggs received a presidential appointment in 2017 to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights State Advisory Committee, where he has served in leadership roles, including as vice chair. He also serves as a Civil Rights Compliance Specialist with the Hawai'i Department of Education, drawing on a distinguished record of public service and civil rights advocacy. His background includes more than twenty-six years of honorable service in the United States Navy, with assignments from the Pentagon to special programs. He has shown a consistent commitment to strengthening civil rights protections in Hawai'i and contributing to national discussions. His extensive and wide-ranging service with the NAACP, including roles as Assistant Secretary on its National Board of Directors and president of the Honolulu branch, demonstrates the depth and trust placed in his long record of leadership.

Mr. Braggs is also active in numerous community and civil rights efforts, including the Japanese American Citizens League Honolulu Chapter, the FBI Community Civil Rights Advisory Committee, and the Downtown Honolulu International Rotary Club, where he supports youth programs. His experience demonstrates a strong grounding in civil rights principles and a collaborative approach to public service. His proven leadership, integrity, and commitment to equity make him exceptionally well-qualified for appointment. For these reasons, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations respectfully urges the Committee to confirm Alphonso Braggs to the Civil Rights Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Governor's Message 674.



HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION KOMIKINA PONO KIWILA O HAWAI‘I

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411, HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: (808) 586-8636 · FAX: (808) 586-8655 · TDD: (808) 586-8692

Thursday, April 2, 2026

10:30am

Conference Room 016 & Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street

To:

[COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY](#)

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair

From: Marcus L. Kawatachi, Executive Director, Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission
Constance Yonashiro, Chief Counsel, Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: G.M. No. 674

Testimony in Strong Support

GM 674 submits the nomination of Alphonso Braggs to the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (“HCRC” or “Commission”), for Senate consideration and confirmation, for a term to expire on June 30, 2029.

Since July 1, 2025, Mr. Braggs has been serving as the Interim Chair for the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission. In just this short time, Mr. Braggs’s experience and expertise have proven to be invaluable assets to the Commission, and HCRC staff are tremendously appreciative of his leadership.

As background, the HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state-funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I § 5. The statutory qualifications for HCRC Commissioners are laid out in HRS § 368-2(a): “The members appointed to the commission shall be

selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in civil rights matters and on the basis of a demonstrated commitment to the preservation of the civil rights of all individuals.”

Mr. Braggs’s impressive background undeniably demonstrates his vast body of knowledge and experience in civil rights. He has devoted the entirety of his personal and professional life to the service of others, particularly in preserving and safeguarding the civil rights of all individuals. We deeply appreciate Mr. Braggs’s willingness to serve on the Commission and would be honored for him to continue as our Chair.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in support.



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/27/2026

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: CR 016 & Videoconference

Committee: JDC

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: GM674, SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, ALPHONSO BRAGGS, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2029.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department), respectfully supports the nomination of Mr. Braggs, as set forth in Governor's Message 674, to the Civil Rights Commission.

Mr. Braggs brings a lifetime of service, leadership, and commitment to civil and human rights. His distinguished 26-year career in the United States Navy, followed by extensive public service at both the federal and state levels, reflects a deep dedication to serving others and strengthening communities. In his current role as a Civil Rights Compliance Specialist with the Department, he has demonstrated a strong understanding of civil rights protections and a steadfast commitment to equity and inclusion within our schools.

Beyond his professional experience, Mr. Braggs has an extensive record of leadership in civic and community organizations, including his service with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) at the local, state, and national levels, as well as his involvement with numerous advisory committees focused on civil rights and community engagement. His broad perspective, informed by decades of service and advocacy, will be a valuable asset to the Civil Rights Commission.

The Department is confident that Mr. Braggs' experience, integrity, and dedication to advancing civil rights will serve the State of Hawaii well.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this nomination.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 2:05:38 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne Barbee	Testifying for African American Lawyers Association	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Dear Senator Rhoads and Senate members:

It is my pleasure to support Mr. Alphonso Braggs as Chair of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. I am a former Civil Rights Commission member, (1989-1995) and served on the first Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. I am proud Governor Green selected Mr. Braggs as Chair. I have known Mr. Braggs for over 25 years. We have sat in meetings, attended civil rights events and he served as President of the NAACP Hawaii for over 10 years. He is honest, sincere, a hard worker and has a passion for civil rights. He has a thorough knowledge of the issues regarding civil rights in Hawaii and in the nation. He will bring his great wealth of knowledge to the Commission and the State of Hawaii. He has been honored numerous times for his work with the NAACP and Japanese American Citizen League as a Board member. The African American Lawyer Association of Hawaii, of which I am past President, supports this extremely qualified Chair for the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission.

Should you have further questions, I will be happy to answer them. Thank you for your consideration.

Daphne Barbee-Wooten

Attorney at Law

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/25/2026 6:33:32 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/2/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joshua Osegueda	Testifying for Rotary Club of Downtown Honolulu	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Senator Karl Rhoads

Senate Committee on Judiciary

State Capitol, Room 228

Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Aloha Senator Rhoads,

I am pleased to write in strong support of **Mr. Alphonso Braggs** for appointment to the **Civil Rights Commission**.

Mr. Braggs is a respected leader whose commitment to civil rights, equity, and community service is both longstanding and deeply rooted in action. He possesses the experience, judgment, and dedication necessary to serve effectively on the Commission during this important time.

I have personally witnessed Mr. Braggs' commitment to empowering youth across O'ahu through mentorship, service, and leadership opportunities that uplift individuals and strengthen our broader community. His ability to lead with integrity, compassion, and purpose makes him exceptionally well suited for this role.

In a time when strong and principled civil rights leadership is essential, I believe Mr. Braggs would be an outstanding addition to the Civil Rights Commission. I respectfully urge your support for his appointment.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joshua Osegueda, M.S.W.

President, Rotary Club of Downtown Honolulu

2025-2026



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF CONFIRMATION OF
GM NO. 674 SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE CIVIL
RIGHTS COMMISSION, GUBERNATIONAL NOMINEE ALPHONSO BRAGGS**

**SENATOR KARL RHOADS, CHAIR
SENATOR MIKE GABBARD, VICE CHAIR**

SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

**SHAWN BENTON
WILLIAM KANEKO
CO-CHAIRS**

HAWAI'I COALITION FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

Hearing Date: Friday, March 27, 2026, 10:00 am, Room 016

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

The Hawai'i Coalition for Civil Rights (HCCR) is a coalition of over 100+ leading social justice, civil rights, and immigration organizations and individuals, including the ACLU of Hawai'i, Japanese American Citizens League, J20+, The Legal Clinic, NAPABA Hawai'i, and others. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong support** of the confirmation of Alphonso Braggs as a Commissioner of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC).

The HCRC plays a vital role in ensuring that the civil rights of all people in Hawai'i are protected, particularly in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state-funded services. At a moment when civil rights protections are under intense pressure at the federal level, the HCRC's integrity and leadership matter more than ever. We need commissioners who bring not only the requisite legal and professional knowledge, but also deep community roots and an unwavering commitment to justice.

Mr. Braggs is such a person. His decades of civil rights service speak for themselves. He has served on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights State Advisory Committee since 2017, a U.S. Presidential appointment confirmed by the U.S. Senate, including four years as Vice Chair. He has served on the NAACP National Board of Directors since 2013 and has been the Hawai'i NAACP President since 2004. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Japanese American Citizens League Honolulu Chapter since 2005. He currently serves as a Civil Rights Compliance Specialist with the Hawai'i Department of Education, where he investigates civil rights complaints.

This is not a resume assembled for an appointment. It is a lifetime of consistent, principled civil rights work in the communities he seeks to serve. Mr. Braggs understands that Hawai'i's people are among the most diverse in the nation, and that many face economic and social disadvantages that limit their access to legal resources and recourse. His commitment to transparency, community education, and impartial investigation reflects exactly what this commission requires.

We are also confident that Mr. Braggs will bring the highest standards of integrity to his role. He has been clear and transparent about potential conflicts of interest arising from his work at the DOE and his

NAACP leadership, and has committed to appropriate recusals. This kind of proactive ethical awareness is precisely what we want in a Commissioner.

We respectfully urge the Committee to confirm the appointment of Alphonso Braggs to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. The people of Hawai'i will be well served by his leadership. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/30/2026 8:52:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/2/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I strongly recommend Mr. Alfonso Braggs to me a commission with HCRC. I am a long-time advocate for civil rights and served as its first chair, member of the advisory state committee of the US Civil Rights Commission and UH Manoa Emeritus Vice Chancellor for Student Diversity. I have worked with Mr Braggs on important civil rights policy issues and community events for over three decades and he demonstrated his knowledge of the law and commitment to the constitution and civil rights. He has integrity, is collaborative and makes fair decisions.

I want to thank him for sharing his time, expertise, credibility, leadership and service.

Dr. Amy Agbayani

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 7:45:50 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm proud to support Alphonso Braggs for the Civil Rights Commission. Over the years that I have known him, he has worked for the betterment of the community and its civil rights. He will definitely be an asset to the Commission.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/23/2026 11:49:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Micah Acfalle	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Micah Acfalle, and I'm a student at Radford High School. I'm writing to show my support for Alphonso Braggs' appointment to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

From my own experience, Mr. Braggs has really helped students and young people in our community, including me. He's given us chances to get involved, speak up, and make a difference. It takes real care and effort to show that kind of leadership, and he consistently shows both.

He also brings experience that matters for this role, like his service in the armed forces and his work with the NAACP, including being Branch President and a member of the National Board of Directors. All of this shows he's committed to civil rights and to helping our communities.

Hawai'i is a very diverse place, and it's important that the Civil Rights Commission understands and supports all of its people. I believe Alphonso Braggs will do that and more.

I strongly urge you to support his appointment.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Micah Acfalle

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 1:10:29 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Antwanisha Williamson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support his confirmation!

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 8:50:56 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nandita Sharma	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of ALPHONSO BRAGGS's confirmation as Commissioner of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 11:25:11 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Amy Monk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Alphonso Braggs, President of Hawaii NAACP, is an excellent nominee for Commissioner of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. Fully qualified and dedicated to the mission of the Civil Rights Commission. I fully support his confirmation.

Amy Monk



HARRISON LAW CENTER
A LAW CORPORATION

William A. Harrison
william@harrisonlawcenter.com
www.harrisonlawcenter.com
Tel: (808)523-7041

American Savings Bank Tower
1001 Bishop Street, Suite 2828
Honolulu, Hawai`i 96813
Fax: (808)538-7579

March 24, 2026

Senator Karl Rhoades, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
Hawaii State Senate
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

**Re: Strong Support for the Appointment of Alphonso Braggs to the Hawaii
Civil Rights Commission (GM674)**

Hearing: Friday, March 27, 2026

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Conf. Room 016

Dear Chair Rhoades and Vice Chair Gabbard:

I write to express my **strong support** for the appointment of Alphonso Braggs to serve on the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission (HCRC). I offer this support in my capacity as a practicing Hawaii Attorney and based on my over 20 years of working with and observing Mr. Braggs in professional and community settings.

The HCRC's work is foundational to ensuring that Hawaii's civil rights laws are meaningfully enforced and that residents have a fair, accessible forum to address discrimination. As you know, the Commission's responsibilities require an individual who is independent, even-handed, and deeply committed to due process, while also capable of leading an agency that must earn and maintain public trust across diverse communities. Mr. Braggs is exceptionally well-suited to meet those demands.

Professional Qualifications and Leadership

Mr. Braggs brings a record of years of leadership, legal/public service experience, management of complex matters, policy work, community engagement, mediation, and administrative oversight to the position. In my experience, he consistently demonstrates:

- Sound judgment and integrity, particularly when issues are sensitive, contested, or high stakes;
- Respect for process and fairness, ensuring that all parties are heard and treated with dignity;
- Clear, practical communication, including the ability to explain complex issues in a way that is accessible and constructive; and
- Collaborative leadership, building consensus where possible while remaining principled and decisive when necessary.

By way of example, I first had the opportunity to work with Mr. Braggs on an NAACP matter many years ago. In that challenging case, he acted with diligence and dedication in assisting the client, drawing upon his extensive knowledge and experience to secure a highly favorable outcome. These experiences exemplify the temperament, judgment, and competence expected of a member of an agency entrusted with enforcing civil rights protections.

Commitment to the HCRC's Mission and Jurisdiction

The HCRC's jurisdiction in Hawaii includes enforcement of state civil rights laws in employment, housing, public accommodations, and/or other covered areas; investigation and resolution of complaints; education and outreach; and related responsibilities. A Commissioner must ensure that the Commission's work is carried out with professionalism, consistency, and transparency, and that the agency remains accessible to the public while safeguarding the rights of all parties involved.

Mr. Braggs' approach aligns with these responsibilities. He understands that the Commission's effectiveness depends not only on outcomes, but also on the credibility of its processes-timely intake, thorough investigation, careful evaluation

of evidence, and fair resolution practices.

Personal Goals as a Commissioner

Mr. Braggs has articulated clear goals for his service as a commissioner, including improving timeliness and efficiency, strengthening public education and outreach, enhancing consistency in decision-making, supporting staff development, expanding community partnerships, improving language access, increasing transparency, or modernizing systems and procedures. These goals are practical, mission-centered, and responsive to the needs of Hawaii's communities.

Importantly, Mr. Braggs' leadership style reflects a commitment to public service over politics. He is prepared to sit as a commissioner in a manner that is fair to complainants and respondents alike, grounded in the law, and attentive to the real-world impacts of discrimination and unequal access.

Conclusion

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Senate Committee on Judiciary to support Alphonso Braggs's appointment to the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. I am confident he will serve with distinction and will strengthen the Commission's ability to fulfill its mandate for the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me at (phone/email) if I can provide any additional information.

Respectfully,



William A. Harrison

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 2:20:26 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Reginald Parker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support his confirmation. He is most qualified for this position and will make an excellent Commissioner. He is knowledgeable, fully dedicated, and has the experience necessary to serve effectively. I strongly recommend him without hesitation.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 3:33:50 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jamel Williams	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally recommend Alphonso Braggs for appointment to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. As a member of the NAACP, I have observed Mr. Braggs' unwavering commitment to equity and justice, making them an ideal choice for this vital role.

The HCRC's mission to eliminate discrimination through enforcement and education requires commissioners who possess both legal insight and deep community roots. Mr. Braggs meets these needs through:

- **Expertise in Civil Rights:** He has a proven track record in all aspects of civil rights, mirroring the specialized experience often found in Commission leaders.
- **Commitment to Diversity:** Mr. Braggs has consistently advocated for protected classes in Hawai'i, including our veterans who have served our country.
- **Fair & Objective Judgment:** He demonstrated the ability to evaluate complex facts and arrive at sound, objective conclusions—skills critical for HCRC adjudications.

I am confident that Alphonso Braggs will significantly benefit the Commission as it works to protect the rights of all individuals in our islands.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 4:12:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Natiley L. Duke	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

He is fully dedicated, knowledgeable, and has the requisite experience to serve effectively.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 6:26:32 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Geary F. Reed	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Geary Reed Strongly recommend him for this position. Because Mr. Braggs is a man of integrity his commitment to Hawaii is rooted in honesty and respect for his follow citizens!

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/24/2026 8:41:52 PM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha!

I strongly **support** confirming Alphonso Braggs to be a commissioner of the Hawaii Civil Right Commission. He is knowledgeable and has the requisite experience to serve effectively.

Mahalo,

Melanie Lau, MD

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/25/2026 10:05:57 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Edward H. Young, Jr,	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have personally known Mr. Alphonso Braggs for over 30 years, and he is imminently qualified to serve on the Hawaii State Civil Rights Commission. I am in support of his nomination, Mr. Braggs's community service is distinguished by his tireless efforts to advance civil rights in various roles, whether having served as one of Hawai'i representative on the US Civil Rights Commission, service as the long standing President of the Honolulu Branch of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the national leaderships roles he has served, Mr. Braggs has served with distinction in the US military, in both enlisted and civilian capacities, and his record of ethical and moral leadership is greatly needed.

I cannot think of a more imminently qualified candidate than Mr. Alphonso Braggs, and I appreciate the opportunity to offer my unqualified support.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/25/2026 10:48:06 AM

Testimony for JDC on 3/27/2026 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dr. Medgar L. Reid	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support his confirmation..

Reverend Dr. Medgar L. Reid - 2nd Vice President of The Interfaith Alliance Hawai'i

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/26/2026 2:17:02 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/2/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Evalina Ramsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Alphonso Braggs is knowledgeable and has the requisite experience to serve effectively therefore I strongly support his confirmation.

GM-674

Submitted on: 3/26/2026 5:43:18 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/2/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support the confirmation of Alphonso Braggs.



COX WOOTTON LERNER
GRIFFIN & HANSEN LLP

www.cwlfirm.com

sbenton@cwlfirm.com
Direct: (808) 892-3297

March 26, 2026

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 228
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**Re: Confirmation Hearing – Alphonso Braggs to the Hawai'i Civil Rights
Commission, GM No. 674
Hearing on April 2, 2026 at 10:30 a.m.**

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

I write in **strong personal support** of the confirmation of Alphonso Braggs as a Commissioner of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. I have had the privilege of knowing and working alongside Mr. Braggs for many years through our shared service on the Board of Directors of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) Honolulu Chapter, and I can speak to his character, his dedication, and his deep commitment to civil rights with great confidence.

Mr. Braggs is one of those rare individuals who has spent an entire career in service to others, not because it advanced him professionally, but because he genuinely believes in justice and equality for every person. His record is extraordinary: nearly two decades as Hawai'i NAACP President, service on the NAACP National Board of Directors, a U.S. Presidential appointment to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights State Advisory Committee, and years of work investigating civil rights violations as a specialist with the Hawai'i State Department of Education. He has served this community for over thirty years.

What I know from working with Mr. Braggs personally is something that does not always come through in a resume--he listens. He approaches every situation with patience, humility, and a genuine desire to understand the people in front of him. These qualities are exactly what the Civil Rights Commission needs, particularly at a time when Hawai'i's communities are facing significant stress, when people are afraid to assert their rights, and when trust in institutions is fragile. I am also confident in his integrity. He is not seeking this position for personal gain, but is seeking it because he wants to serve.

San Francisco
900 Front St., Suite 350
San Francisco, California 94111
T 415.438.4600 F 415.438.4601

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12011 San Vicente Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, California 90049
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Honolulu
700 Bishop St., Suite 2008
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
T 808.744.7020 F 808.354.0427

March 26, 2026

Page 2

The Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission will be stronger, more trusted, and more effective with Mr. Braggs on it. I offer my strong support for his confirmation and hope the Committee will act favorably on his appointment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shawn L.M. Benton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Shawn L.M. Benton
COX, WOOTTON, LERNER,
GRIFFIN & HANSEN LLP

Friday, April 2, 2026
Conference Room 016 &
Videoconference

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

From: Bill Hoshijo

Re: G.M. No. 674

I am writing in strong support of the nomination of Alphonso Braggs to serve as a Commissioner of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC). Based on his record of experience, demonstrated commitment to civil rights, and familiarity with the civil rights laws that the HCRC has under its jurisdiction, I have no doubt that Mr. Braggs will contribute to the important work of the HCRC and well serve the people of Hawai‘i.

For 26 years, from 1997 through my retirement in March 2023, I served as the Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission.

The HCRC is responsible for enforcement of our state civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state-funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

The statutory qualifications for HCRC Commissioners are laid out in HRS § 368-2(a): “The members appointed to the commission shall be selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in civil rights matters and on the basis of a demonstrated commitment to the preservation of the civil rights of all individuals.”

It is hard to imagine a person better suited to serve as an HCRC Commissioner than Mr. Braggs. In addition to his demonstrated commitment to the civil rights of all of Hawai'i's people, he has a record of service and leadership in his professional life. An excellent communicator, he has been able to share his values with youth from diverse backgrounds – emphasizing that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. He is regarded by his peers as a person of exemplary character.

I urge the Committee and the Senate to approve and confirm the nomination of Alphonso Braggs to be a Commissioner of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. I recommend him to you without reservation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Greetings,

I recommend Mr. Alphonso Braggs for Civil Rights Commissioner. He is more than qualified and will serve the Civil Rights Commission well.

Thank you,

Khalada Salaam-Alaji

Second VP

Housing Chair

San Diego NAACP Branch

March 29, 2026

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

From: Liann Ebesugawa

Re: STRONG SUPPORT OF GM674 Civil Rights Commission, Gubernatorial Appointee,
ALPHONSO BRAGGS

Hearing: Thursday, April 2, 2026, 10:30 a.m., Conference Room 016 & Video Conference

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

I write this letter in strong support of Alphonso Braggs' nomination to the Civil Rights Commission.

Mr. Braggs is a consummate defender of civil rights and a true social justice advocate. His life's work is an embodiment of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." He truly lives his values as a long-time leader in NAACP's Hawaii chapter and the national organization. Mr. Braggs does not see his responsibility as limited to the work of the NAACP. The dedication of his time and effort demonstrates that he sees the importance of fairness in our society much more broadly.

I have known Mr. Braggs for nearly 16 years as we have served together on the Japanese American Citizens League of Honolulu ("JACL") Board of Directors. The JACL's work is historically rooted in the unlawful incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. It is due to this injustice that the JACL works tirelessly to ensure that the same injustice never comes to bear upon anyone. Mr. Braggs has served on the JACL Board for over 20 years. His dedication to standing alongside others to protect the rights of all, truly highlights his character.

Through our work on a number of civil rights issues over these many years, I have found Mr. Braggs to be thoughtful, caring and effective. In our discussion of projects or issues, he will often ask questions that point to broader policy implications. He brings such a breadth of knowledge about civil rights work both locally and nationally.

He will continue to be of great service to the community if appointed as a commissioner. As a former chairperson of the Civil Rights Commission, I can say that if we had served together, I would have been so grateful for the wisdom and knowledge he brings to all his endeavors.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support.

W. Clyde Lemon
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March 24, 2026

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads Via email: senrhoads@capitol.hawaii.gov
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 228
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

FROM: W. Clyde Lemon

Subj: Confirmation of Alphonso Braggs to the Civil Rights Commission, G.M. No. 674

Dear Senator Rhoads:

This letter is submitted with the utmost enthusiasm of support for Alphonso Braggs to serve on the Civil Rights Commission.

I make this recommendation after having worked with him for the past six (6) years, on the National Armed Service and Veterans Committee for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, hereinafter NAACP. During that time, Alphonso Braggs has attended in excess of ninety-five (95) percent of our NAACP committee meetings, in spite of the time difference. He is prepared for the meetings, tactful, and understands how to build consensus.

Therefore, with the utmost enthusiasm, I recommend Alphonso Braggs be confirmed to serve on the Civil Rights Commission.

Sincerely,

Waymon C. Lemon
W. Clyde Lemon

cc. Alphonso Braggs



Fujiwara & Rosenbaum, LLLC

*Alahea Corporate Tower
1100 Alahea St., Fl. 20, Suite B
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813*

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Date: April 2, 2026, 10:30 AM, Room 016

Re: Fujiwara & Rosenbaum Testimony in **Strong Support of GM No. 674, Confirmation of Alphonso Braggs as Commissioner, Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission**

Chair Rhodes, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

Fujiwara & Rosenbaum, LLLC submits this testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Alphonso Braggs as a Commissioner of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC). Our firm has advocated for the civil rights of Hawai'i's workers and residents since 1986, concentrating on employment discrimination, sexual harassment, disability rights, whistleblower protection, and police brutality. I write not only as the Senior Partner of a firm that has spent four decades litigating civil rights cases in this state, but as someone who knows Alphonso Braggs personally and has witnessed his committed work in our community over many years.

I have practiced before the HCRC for over 36 years. I also served as a Senior Trial Attorney at the EEOC-Honolulu Office. Between my work at the EEOC and my decades of practice before the HCRC, I am intimately familiar with the work of the Commission and the direct impact its Commissioners have on whether civil rights laws in this state are enforced with purpose or merely administered as a formality. I have seen the difference when Commissioners are proactive, engaged, and genuinely invested in the mission of the Commission. I have also seen what happens when individuals treat a commissioner appointment as little more than a line on a resume, a community obligation to be fulfilled rather than a calling to be honored. Alphonso Braggs is not that. He is the real thing.

The HCRC's Role Has Never Been More Important

The HCRC is the state agency charged with enforcing Hawai'i Revised Statutes Chapter 368 and Chapter 378, which prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state-funded services. The HCRC serves as Hawai'i's equivalent of the federal EEOC, and for many workers and families, it is the first and most accessible avenue for vindicating their rights under the Hawai'i's discrimination laws. **At a moment when civil rights protections are under intense pressure at the federal level and are often under the Trump administration, basically upside down, the HCRC's integrity and leadership matter more than ever.**

For the workers our firm represents, the Commission is not an abstraction. It is the agency that investigates a hotel housekeeper's complaint of race discrimination, that determines whether a pregnant retail employee was unlawfully terminated, that holds employers accountable when whistleblowers are retaliated against. The quality of its Commissioners directly determines whether Hawai'i's civil rights laws are enforced with rigor or allowed to atrophy.

Mr. Braggs Is Exceptionally Qualified

Mr. Braggs brings decades of consistent, principled civil rights work to this appointment. He has served as Hawai'i NAACP President since 2004 and on the NAACP National Board of Directors since 2013. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Japanese American Citizens League Honolulu Chapter since 2005, reflecting a commitment to multiracial coalition and the broad protection of civil rights across all communities. He was appointed by the President of the United States to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights State Advisory Committee, where he served for years including four years as Vice Chair.

I know from personal experience that these positions are not titles Alphonso holds at a distance. He shows up. He does the work. He engages with the people these organizations exist to serve. This is a lifetime of service, not a resume assembled for an appointment.

Mr. Braggs currently serves as a Civil Rights Compliance Specialist with the Hawai'i Department of Education, where he investigates civil rights complaints. This means he already possesses direct, hands-on experience with the investigative and compliance functions that are central to the HCRC's work. He understands how to receive a complaint, gather evidence impartially, apply legal standards, and reach a determination. That practical expertise will translate immediately to his work as a Commissioner.

Real-World Impact for Hawai'i's Residents

Consider the concrete difference a Commissioner of Mr. Braggs's caliber makes. When a Native Hawaiian construction worker files a complaint alleging racial harassment on a job site, he needs a Commissioner who understands the lived reality of race in Hawai'i, not just the legal elements of a claim under HRS § 378-2. When a woman in the hospitality industry reports sexual harassment by a supervisor, she needs a Commissioner who will ensure her complaint is investigated thoroughly and resolved promptly. When an older worker is pushed out and replaced by someone younger, she needs a Commissioner who recognizes the patterns of age discrimination that pervade certain industries in our state.

Having practiced before the HCRC for over 36 years, I can tell this Committee with confidence that the disposition and engagement of individual Commissioners shapes the culture of the entire agency. A proactive Commissioner raises the standard of every investigation, every finding, and every resolution the Commission issues. Mr. Braggs understands that Hawai'i's people are among the most diverse in the nation, and that many face economic and social disadvantages that limit their access to legal resources and recourse. His commitment to transparency, community education, and impartial investigation reflects exactly what the Commission requires.

Conclusion

Fujiwara & Rosenbaum, LLLC respectfully and strongly urges this Committee to confirm the appointment of Alphonso Braggs to the HCRC. The people of Hawai'i will be well served by his leadership. In my almost four decades of civil rights practice in this state, and in my personal knowledge of Alphonso Braggs and his work, I am certain of this: he will serve this Commission with the same conviction, integrity, and dedication that has defined his entire career. Hawai'i's workers and residents deserve nothing less.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

GM-674

Submitted on: 4/2/2026 8:16:38 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/2/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ernest Whitesides	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support Alphonso Braggs for this position. I have know Mr Braggs for more than 10 years. During this time he has always demonstrated extraordinary leadership, love for and the wellbeing of the community, and has invested an abundant of time and and a great deal of energy mentoring our youth and our future leaders. He will make an excellent Commissioner, and will represent the office and the state very well. I cannot think of anyone who may be more qualified.

Very Respectfully,

Ernest Whitesides

Sergeant Major, US Army, Retired