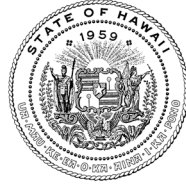


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

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

April 10, 2026

To: The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair  
The Honorable Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Labor and Technology Committee

Date: Friday, April 10, 2026  
Time: 3:00 p.m.  
Place: Conference Room 225, State Capitol

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

**Re: G.M. 793, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, ASHLEIGH LOA, for a term to expire 06-30-2030.**

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations **supports** the confirmation of Ashleigh Loa to the Workforce Development Council.

Ms. Loa brings a strong record of service in community development, workforce engagement, and programs that expand opportunities for residents across the state. Her experience includes coordinating initiatives that support career readiness, strengthening connections between service providers and the communities they serve, and helping individuals navigate pathways toward employment and skill building. She has worked closely with partners across sectors to enhance access to resources and improve outcomes for youth and adults seeking to enter or reenter the workforce.

Her background in program coordination, community partnership building, and direct support for workforce initiatives aligns with the mission of the Workforce Development Council, which depends on members who understand the needs of workers, employers, and training providers. Ms. Loa's commitment to service, combined with her experience supporting individuals through education and employment transitions, will contribute to the Council's efforts to strengthen Hawai'i's workforce system and prepare residents for long-term economic opportunity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 793.

**DR. JOSH GREEN**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



**JADE BUTAY**  
DLIR DIRECTOR

**WILLIAM KUNSTMAN**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**KEITH DEMELLO**  
CHAIRPERSON

**BENNETTE E. MISALUCHA**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**  
**Department of Labor and Industrial Relations**  
830 Punchbowl Street, Suite 317, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Phone: (808) 586-8815 Web: <http://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/>

To: The Honorable Senator Brandon Elefante, Chair,  
The Honorable Senator Rachele Lamosao, Vice-Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Date: Friday, April 10, 2026

Time: 3:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 225, State Capitol

From: Keith DeMello  
Chair, Workforce Development Council

**Re: GM 793: Gubernatorial Nominee, Ashleigh Loa**

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL IN STRONG SUPPORT**

The Workforce Development Council (WDC) respectfully submits this testimony in support of the confirmation of Ms. Ashleigh Loa as a member of the Council.

Ms. Loa brings a deeply rooted commitment to community, shaped by her upbringing on O‘ahu and guided by values of compassion, integrity, and service. These values are reflected in both her personal journey and her professional work.

Ms. Loa currently serves as the Director of Operations for Hawaiian Community Assets (HCA), a respected community development financial institution with a mission to build the capacity of low- and moderate-income communities to achieve and sustain economic self-sufficiency, with a particular focus on Native Hawaiians. Through its Kahua Waiwai philosophy, HCA emphasizes the importance of housing as a foundation for long-term stability, recognizing that a secure home environment enables families to build financial strength, preserve cultural values, and create opportunities for future generations.

In her role, Ms. Loa contributes to advancing programs that integrate affordable housing, culturally grounded financial education, and asset-building strategies. These efforts are directly aligned with

workforce development goals, as stable housing and financial literacy are essential to sustained employment, career advancement, and overall economic mobility.

Ms. Loa's background in the nonprofit sector, including her experience providing direct services in a homeless shelter and leading an interfaith organization focused on social justice and grassroots leadership, gives her a strong understanding of the challenges faced by underserved communities. Her work reflects a holistic view of workforce development, one that recognizes that employment outcomes are closely tied to housing stability, financial capability, and community support systems.

Her perspective will be especially valuable as the State advances its Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Unified Plan and continues to work toward the Generational Workforce Commitment, ensuring that all residents of Hawai'i have pathways to learn, work, thrive, and belong.

Ms. Loa brings an important voice to the Council, one that reflects community experience, cultural grounding, and a strong commitment to equity and opportunity for Native Hawaiian and local communities.

For these reasons, the Workforce Development Council respectfully supports the confirmation of Ms. Ashleigh Loa.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully Submitted,

Keith DeMello  
Chair  
Workforce Development Council

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/8/2026 4:10:12 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Josh Michaels (in personal capacity)	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have known Ashleigh Loa for nearly two decades and am constantly in awe of her compassionate heart and sharp intellect. She cares deeply about the future of our community and would be an incredible servant for the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. Strong, strong, strong support!!!

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/8/2026 4:13:55 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Chanel Josiah	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Chanel Josiah, and I am writing in strong support of the appointment of Ashleigh Loa to the Workforce Development Council.

I have had the privilege of working alongside Ashleigh and seeing firsthand how she shows up in community, in systems work, and in spaces where decisions directly impact people’s lives. What stands out most about Ashleigh is not just her professional capability, but the depth of understanding she brings to the work.

In my work, I engage regularly with individuals and families across different islands who are trying to stabilize, find opportunity, and build something better for themselves. Through this, it is clear that workforce development in Hawai‘i cannot be approached from a purely technical or policy-driven lens. Its success depends on whether systems reflect what people are actually navigating day to day—cost of living, housing instability, transportation, and access to opportunity. These factors ultimately determine whether individuals can participate in and benefit from workforce programs at all.

Ashleigh understands this through lived experience, and she consistently works to bridge the gap between how systems are designed and how they are experienced by those who interact with them.

She has a unique ability to move between strategy and reality. She can sit in conversations about policy, alignment, and systems-level coordination, and at the same time remain grounded in what will actually work for the people those systems are meant to serve. She brings clarity where there is often fragmentation and keeps the focus on outcomes that matter.

The Workforce Development Council plays a critical role in aligning workforce systems, advising on priorities, and ensuring that efforts across the state are coordinated and effective. This work requires leaders who understand both systems and communities; leaders who can bridge that space with intention and accountability.

Ashleigh brings both.

In my professional opinion, Ashleigh exceeds the expectations of this role. She brings insight, integrity, and a culturally grounded perspective that will strengthen the Council's ability to serve Hawai'i's people in a meaningful way.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support GM 793 and confirm her appointment.

Na'u me ke aloha,  
Chanel Josiah, COO

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/8/2026 4:15:23 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology,

I wish to express my full SUPPORT for Ashleigh Loa, candidate for membership on the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. I have known Ms. Loa for a decade in both a personal and professional capacity. She was my staff organizer at Faith Action for Community Equity before I left the organization in her hands to carry on our important grassroots organizing work in the community.

Her work experience with low-income, homeless and housing insecure families throughout her career has given her the perspective and understanding that I strongly believe she will contribute to this Council. She is well aware of the needs of families in Hawai'i as well as the significant employment barriers they experience. Ms. Loa has an innovative and creative mind and is a very intent listener, flexible, collaborative, and solution-focused.

I hope Ms. Loa is given the opportunity to contribute her ideas and passion to the Council. Mahalo for your consideration.

Christy K. MacPherson

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/8/2026 6:05:32 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Liliana Napoleon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of ASHLEIGH LOA for the GM793 as she served as an exceptional supervisor during my time with Hawaiian Community Assets. I am confident ASHLEIGH LOA will serve well within the expressed GM793 role.

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/9/2026 9:29:03 AM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Danicole Ramos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear LBT Committte:

I write in strong support of the nomination of Ashleigh Loa.

I have had the privilege of working with Ashleigh in my capacity as a former Board President of Faith Action Hawai'i, where I supervised her during her tenure as Executive Director. During that time, I witnessed firsthand her leadership, resilience, and deep commitment to serving our community.

Ashleigh led the organization during a particularly challenging period, marked by limited resources and a decline in participation among faith-based groups. Despite these constraints, she worked diligently to rebuild relationships, re-engage stakeholders, and bring diverse communities back together around shared priorities. In particular, she played a critical role in organizing and advocating around affordable housing; an issue she understands not only professionally, but personally, as a working mother navigating the realities of Hawai'i's high cost of living.

Her leadership style is both strategic and deeply empathetic. Ashleigh effectively supervised three other organizers, while also guiding advocacy efforts on key policy measures. She possesses a strong ability to connect lived experiences with policy solutions, which is especially important at a time when workforce development and economic stability in Hawai'i are closely tied to access to affordable housing.

Ashleigh's background as a nonprofit executive, combined with her personal experiences, makes her uniquely qualified to serve in this role. She brings emotional intelligence, integrity, and a genuine commitment to improving the lives of working families across our state.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support her nomination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Danicole Ramos



# Kris Coffield

808-679-7454 | kriscoffield@gmail.com

Friday, April 10, 2026

**Committee Referral: LBT**

**Subject: Strong Support for the Appointment of Ashleigh Loa to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (GM 793)**

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the appointment of Ashleigh Loa to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, pursuant to GM 793.

I have had the privilege of working alongside Ashleigh on economic justice, housing, and social impact initiatives, and I can speak firsthand to her deep commitment to expanding opportunity for Hawai'i's working families. She brings strong policy insight and a grounded understanding of the real-world challenges people face in accessing stable housing, quality jobs, and pathways to economic mobility.

Ashleigh's leadership as Executive Director of Faith Action for Community Equity reflects her deep commitment to community-driven change. In that role, she worked closely with interfaith partners and grassroots leaders to address the root causes of social and economic inequities in Hawai'i, particularly around affordable housing, civic engagement, and community empowerment.

She has helped mobilize residents to participate in the legislative process and advocate for policies that improve the quality of life across our islands. Just as importantly, her grassroots organizing experience translates directly into workforce policy impact, ensuring that workforce strategies are informed by the lived experiences of working families and responsive to the barriers they face in accessing employment, training, and financial stability.

This experience, combined with her current leadership at Hawaiian Community Assets and her background in direct service, gives Ashleigh a uniquely comprehensive perspective. She understands that workforce development is deeply interconnected with housing stability, financial capability, and long-term economic security, and she brings a systems-level approach to policy development that is firmly grounded in community voice.

In my experience working with her, Ashleigh is thoughtful, strategic, and deeply values-driven. She has a rare ability to bring people together across public and private sectors, center the perspectives of vulnerable and marginalized populations, and move complex conversations toward actionable outcomes.

The Hawai'i Workforce Development Council plays a critical role in shaping a workforce system that is responsive to modern challenges. Ashleigh's experience and leadership will be an asset to that work, helping to ensure that workforce strategies reflect the diversity of Hawai'i's population and promote inclusivity and prosperity for future generations.

I strongly urge the Committee to confirm her appointment. She will be an outstanding addition to the Workforce Development Council and a visionary leader in building a more equitable and resilient economy for Hawai'i.

Sincerely,

*Kris Coffield*

Kris Coffield

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/9/2026 12:05:45 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Keith Webster	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Ashleigh Loa for a position on the Workforce Development Council. I worked with Ashleigh for a number of years in the non-profit sector and found her to be bright, compassionate and a very good listener. She's been successful in challenging management roles and has devoted her career to understanding and helping meet the needs of different parts of our community. She is an excellent choice for this important role.

Keith Webster, Kaneohe, HI

**GM-793**

Submitted on: 4/9/2026 12:55:34 PM

Testimony for LBT on 4/10/2026 3:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristen Young	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I submit this testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Ashleigh Loa as a member of the Workforce Development Council (WDC).

I work at Central Union Church in Honolulu and I first met Ashleigh in 2020 through a workshop the church hosted on racial justice, led by our then pastoral intern. At the time, Ashleigh was the Executive Director for Faith Action for Community Equity. She eventually brought on that intern to the Faith Action staff, and brought me on to the Faith Action board. This showed me not only her ability to develop people, but also her knowledge of building foundations with the ‘right’ people, people who will be involved and impacted. For several years, Ashleigh’s remaining time with Faith Action, we worked closely together. I have witnessed her care for community, administrative capacity, and strong work ethic.

Through all of this, we also became good friends and I got to learn more about her background, what she cares about, and other areas where she chooses to give her time. Ashleigh is deeply rooted in community, understands problems of working people, has years of relevant professional experience, and also a great spirit that is sure to bring not only wisdom but also joy to the work.

People like Ashleigh are rare and the Workforce Development Council would be fortunate to have Ashleigh as a member!

Mahalo for the opportunity to share and affirm the nomination of Ashleigh Loa.

Respectfully,  
Kristen Young  
Honolulu, HI 96813



**JOSH FROST**

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Friday, April 10, 2026  
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

GM 793 Confirmation of Ashleigh Loa to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council  
**Testimony in Support**

Aloha Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and committee members:

I testify today as an individual. I am not here representing the ACLU of Hawai'i or any other organization.

I have known Ashleigh Loa for many years and have had the privilege of working with her on issues ranging from minimum wage to paid family leave. She is a passionate and tireless advocate for workers of all stripes.

Her career as a social justice warrior spans nearly a decade and numerous distinguished organizations. She has a deep well of compassion and spent her entire professional career working to improve the lives of the people of Hawaii.

There is no doubt she will serve the Hawaii Workforce Development Council with thoughtful integrity and I applaud the Governor on the appointment of Ashleigh.

Please support this appointment and recommend to the full Senate Ashleigh Loa's confirmation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology  
Friday, April 10, 2026 at 3:00 PM  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

**Re: GM793 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, ASHLEIGH LOA, for a term to expire 06-30-2030.**

Aloha Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of the confirmation of Ashleigh Loa to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

Ashleigh's deep involvement in community gives her a uniquely valuable perspective into Hawai'i's workforce and economic development needs. As the Director of Operations at Hawaiian Community Assets, she supports local families through housing and financial empowerment initiatives. She sees every day the needs of Hawai'i's workforce — and how the state can better meet those needs.

Previously, she served as Executive Director of Ceeds of Peace, which gave her insight into what youth and adults need to create compassionate communities, and as Executive Director of Faith Action for Community Equity, where she led community organizing efforts to address the root causes of Hawai'i's most pressing challenges. She also worked at Family Promise of Hawai'i, which serves families experiencing homelessness, and saw how workforce development is often core to housing stability.

Ashleigh's well-rounded professional perspective is accompanied by her professionalism, integrity, and collaborative approach, which I have seen personally when working with her on many projects throughout the years. These traits were also recognized by the Obama Foundation, which named her an Obama Leader in 2022. She is also dedicated to the community outside of her professional roles, as a consistent volunteer and board member for numerous causes.

I strongly support Ashleigh's confirmation and am confident she would bring an important voice to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. Mahalo for your consideration and the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,



Ryan Catalani