

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



KALBERT K. YOUNG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

GAIL STROHL
DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**STATE OF HAWAII
EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM**

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante
Chair, Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Thirty-Third State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 217
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: GM 634, Letter Supporting the Consideration and Confirmation to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System, Gubernatorial Nominee, Darlene N. Blakeney

Dear Chair Elefante and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Technology:

I am writing to advocate in support of Ms. Darlene N. Blakeney's nomination to serve as a trustee on the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS). I respectfully request your consideration in advancing her confirmation.

Ms. Blakeney has an extensive financial background and stellar career including 20 years of banking experience and currently is the Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer of First Hawaiian Bank and Chief Executive Officer of First Hawaiian Leasing Inc. In a volunteer capacity, Ms. Blakeney serves on numerous non-profit boards. Ms. Blakeney's experience and broad knowledge of finance and financial organizations will be an asset for the Employees' Retirement System and complement the experience and backgrounds of the other Trustees as well.

Ms. Blakeney will prove to be a valuable asset and serve to strengthen the ERS Board. I am confident she will serve the best interests of the ERS, its members and the State.

Sincerely,

Kalbert K. Young
Executive Director



Employees' Retirement System
of the State of Hawaii



LE JARDIN ACADEMY

917 Kalanianaʻole Hwy., Kailua, HI 96734 | T: 808.261.0707 F: 808.262.9339 | www.lejardinacademy.org

Aloha Members of the Legislature:

We write in strong support of Ms. Darlene Blakeney's appointment as Trustee of the Hawai'i Employees' Retirement System (ERS). We have had the privilege of working alongside Darlene on the Board of Trustees of Le Jardin Academy and have seen firsthand the integrity, judgment and discipline she brings to fiduciary governance.

Darlene serves as Chair of our Committee on Trustees and as a member of our Finance Committee. She has consistently demonstrated the qualities essential to effective trusteeship: independence of thought, sound financial oversight and an unwavering commitment to mission. In her service on our Board, she has approached her responsibilities with diligence and preparation, carefully reviewing materials, asking probing and constructive questions and ensuring that decisions are grounded in long-term sustainability rather than short-term convenience.

As trustees of an educational institution with significant financial and strategic responsibilities, our Board must steward assets prudently, oversee budgets and audits, assess risk and hold leadership accountable while preserving strategic focus. Darlene excels in this environment. She understands the distinction between governance and management, respects appropriate delegation and remains steadfast in fulfilling the Board's oversight role. Her financial literacy and comfort with complex information allow her to engage deeply in matters of budgeting, investment policy and enterprise risk management.

Equally important is Darlene's character. She exercises independent judgment, even when consensus may be forming too quickly, and does so with professionalism and respect. She is measured, ethical and principled—qualities indispensable to fiduciary service. We have observed her place institutional interests above personal perspectives and approach sensitive matters with discretion and integrity.

The ERS Board requires trustees who appreciate the gravity of long-term stewardship on behalf of Hawai'i's public employees and retirees. Darlene possesses both the analytical rigor and moral clarity that such responsibility demands. She understands that fiduciary duty is not merely technical compliance but a solemn commitment to act prudently, loyally and in the best interest of beneficiaries.

We are confident that Darlene Blakeney will serve the Hawai'i Employees' Retirement System with distinction. She brings governance experience, financial acumen, sound judgment and a deep respect for public trust. We offer our unequivocal support for her confirmation and thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Meehan
Board Chair
Le Jardin Academy

Earl Kim
Head of School
Le Jardin Academy



March 6, 2026

The Honorable Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
The Honorable Rachele Lamosao, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

Re: GM 634 – For consideration and confirmation to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System, Gubernatorial Nominee, **DARLENE BLAKENY**, for a term to expire 01-01-2032.

Dear Chair Elefante, Vice Chair Lamosao, and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i Medical Service Association (HMSA) appreciates the opportunity to testify in support of GM 634, for the confirmation of **Darlene Blakeny** to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System.

Over the time that I have had the privilege of getting to know Darlene, she has consistently impressed me—both as an exceptional person and as an accomplished finance professional. Her distinguished career in banking is complemented by her deep commitment to the community, particularly through her contributions to educational and cultural initiatives.

Darlene has proven herself to be a servant leader—someone who prioritizes the needs of others and upholds a genuine care for the people she serves. Her expertise, integrity, and compassion are qualities that would greatly benefit the ERS. I am confident that she would be an outstanding fiduciary for our state's hard-working retirees.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Darlene Blakeny.

Sincerely,

Mark M. Mugiishi, M.D.
Chief Executive Officer
HMSA

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 225
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Governor's Message 634 — Consideration of Darlene Blakeney as the Gubernatorial Nominee to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System of the State of Hawaii**

Dear Chair Elefante and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Darlene Blakeney to serve as a Trustee of the Employees' Retirement System (ERS) of the State of Hawaii.

I had the privilege of working closely with Darlene from 2017 to 2023 at First Hawaiian Bank, where she consistently demonstrated professionalism, integrity, and exceptional leadership. Her deep understanding of financial operations, combined with her ability to thoughtfully manage complex issues, will make her an asset to the ERS Board.

Darlene is known for her analytical insight, sound judgment, and collaborative approach. She approaches every challenge with diligence and care, earning the respect of her peers and colleagues throughout the organization. Her background in banking and financial management provides her with the expertise necessary to effectively oversee the complex investment and operational matters of the ERS.

I have every confidence that Darlene will bring a balanced, thoughtful, and principled perspective to the ERS Board of Trustees. She is a person of high integrity who will act in the best interests of the system's members and beneficiaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Darlene Blakeney's nomination to the Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees. I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of her appointment.

Sincerely,



Lance Mizumoto
Former Executive, First Hawaiian Bank

Vincent Barfield
294 Kahako Street
Kailua, HI 96734

March 4, 2026

Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Chair
Committee on Labor and Tehnology
415 South Beretania Street, Room 217
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Nomination of Darlene Blakeney to the Board of Trustees of the
Employees Retirement System, State of Hawaii
GM634

Dear Chairman Elefante & Committee Members:

I offer my strongest support of Ms. Darlene Blakeney's confirmation to the Board of Trustees of the Employees Retirement System of the State of Hawaii ("ERS").

I have known Darlene for three decades. We originally worked as colleagues together at Bank of Hawaii and continued our professional relationship as we pursued our respective executive careers in the industry. She is a highly respected banking and finance professional whose keen business skills and integrity are well known in the business and community organizations for which she has served.

As a two term trustee on the ERS board I am keenly aware of the skills needed to be a successful trustee. Darlene clearly possesses these skills gained through her extensive executive banking and finance experience and community leadership. As interim appointee, she has already shown herself a quick study and contributor to our board and committee meetings. She has demonstrated her ability to quickly grasp the organization and its strategies and processes, while confidently addressing complex topics and issues and appropriately requesting clarifying or added input to help support the board's discussions and decision making. I am certain she will continue to be a valuable contributor as a permanent member on our ERS board. I encourage you to act favorably on her nomination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Darlene Blakeney's confirmation.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vince Barfield', written over the typed name.

Vince Barfield
Chair, Board of Trustees
Employees Retirement System
of the State of Hawaii

March 4, 2026

Senator Brandon Elefante, Chair, Committee on Labor and Technology
Hawaii State Capitol
415 S. Beretania Street, Room 217
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Support for the Appointment of Ms. Darlene Blakeney to the Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees

Dear Chairman Elefante & Committee Members:

I'm writing to offer my strong support for the appointment of Darlene Blakeney to serve as a Trustee of the Hawai'i State Employees' Retirement System (ERS). Having worked closely with Darlene and observed her leadership over many years, I can say with confidence that she possesses the character, competence, and commitment essential for this important fiduciary role.

Throughout her career, including in her current role as Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer, Darlene has demonstrated sound judgment, a deep understanding of financial stewardship, and a steady, principled approach to governance. She oversees complex financial portfolios, evaluates risk with rigor, and consistently brings a disciplined, long-term perspective to the decisions she makes. These skills translate directly to the responsibilities of an ERS trustee, where sound oversight and independent thinking are essential to protecting the retirement security of Hawai'i's public employees.

What sets Darlene apart is her unwavering integrity. She leads with transparency and a genuine dedication to the success of the organization. I have seen her navigate difficult decisions with a clear moral compass, prioritizing what is right, what is sustainable, and what best serves the broader community. Her sense of responsibility is paired with thoughtful, balanced analysis.

Darlene's readiness to serve in a fiduciary capacity is evident in her extensive experience in:

- **Governance:** She has served on multiple committees and leadership teams here at First Hawaiian Bank where accountability, oversight, and sound decision-making are core expectations.
- **Financial Oversight:** She manages significant lending operations and is trusted to evaluate complex financial structures with accuracy and prudence.
- **Risk Management:** Darlene is known for identifying both opportunities and risk issues early, ensuring resilient strategies in diverse market conditions.
- **Independent Judgment:** She is not afraid to ask hard questions and brings an objective voice to discussions, qualities important to a high-performing board.

Equally important, Darlene has a deep respect for the mission of the ERS. She understands that the system's beneficiaries, Hawai'i's public employees and retirees, depend on trustees who can think not only about financial returns, but also about long-term stewardship, stability, and trust. As a Hawaii born resident, her commitment to the people of our state is sincere and enduring.

From my perspective, Darlene is the kind of leader we need in positions of fiduciary responsibility: principled, analytical, compassionate, and invested in the future of Hawai'i. I have no doubt she would serve the ERS well.

Thank you for your consideration of her nomination. Should you wish to discuss her qualifications further, I would be more than happy to do so.

Warm regards,



Robert S. Harrison
Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer
First Hawaiian Bank

Noriko Namiki
Honolulu, HI

March 5, 2026

TO: Senate Committee on Labor and Technology

RE: GM 634 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System, Gubernatorial Nominee, DARLENE BLAKENY, for a term to expire 01-01-2032

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

My name is Noriko Namiki, CEO of YWCA O'ahu and I am pleased to offer my **strong support** for Ms. Darlene Blakeny in consideration for appointment to the Board of Trustees of the Employees' Retirement System of the State of Hawaii.

I had the privilege of working closely with Ms. Blakeny when she served as Chair of the Board of YWCA O'ahu in 2022 and 2023. In that role, I observed firsthand her exceptional leadership, sound judgment, and deep commitment to responsible governance. Her professional experience as an officer at a major financial institution, combined with her thoughtful approach to board leadership, makes her particularly well suited to serve in a fiduciary capacity overseeing public retirement assets.

As Board Chair, Ms. Blakeny brought a disciplined and strategic perspective to financial oversight, risk management, and long-term planning. She consistently approached complex decisions with care and rigor, ensuring that the board fulfilled its governance responsibilities while supporting the organization's long-term stability and mission. Her ability to translate financial complexity into clear, principled decision-making was invaluable to our board and to our management team. She played a critical role in our leadership team making some major decisions as we continued to adapt, change and stabilize our operations which were greatly impacted by COVID-19 and its aftermath.

Equally importantly, Ms. Blakeny leads with integrity and a strong sense of public responsibility. She understands that in our operations, stewardship of institutional resources requires not only technical expertise but also transparency, accountability, and respect for the individuals and communities those resources ultimately serve.

Given her financial expertise, governance experience, and her demonstrated commitment to community service, I am confident that Ms. Blakeny would be a thoughtful and highly effective trustee. I recommend her without reservation and believe she would contribute meaningfully to the important work of safeguarding the retirement security of Hawaii's public employees.

I have no doubt that Ms. Blakeny will be a valuable member to this board.

Sincerely,



Noriko Namiki