

March 17, 2026

Elena Bryant
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Senator Chris Lee
Chair, Senate Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
senlee@capitol.hawaii.gov

RE: GM 647 – Nomination to the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council

Aloha Senator Lee,

I am writing to provide answers to the questions raised in your letter dated March 12, 2026, regarding my nomination to the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council (GM 647). My responses are as follows:

1. Why do you wish to serve as a member of the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council?

Kāneʻohe Bay is an extremely special place to me, my ʻohana, and my community. I was born and raised in Koʻolaupoko and have spent many years in and around Kāneʻohe Bay. Kāneʻohe Bay has and continues to be—quite literally—my backyard. I come from a long line of subsistence and commercial food fishers, and my ʻohana has fished and gathered in the Bay for generations. I have also spent many years boating, paddling, paddleboarding, snorkeling, diving, surfing, and recreating in the Bay. Me and my ʻohana have volunteered with various organizations working to improve the conditions of Kāneʻohe Bay, and I am blessed to be able to raise my own children in and around the Bay where they can enjoy the Bay and learn to be responsible stewards of the Bay and its resources. I am seeking a second term as a member of the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council to continue to play an active role in the Council's stewardship of and advocacy for Kāneʻohe Bay.

2. What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council?

The Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council serves as the public advocate for Kāneʻohe Bay. The Council's key role is to facilitate, implement, review, and amend (as needed) the Kāneʻohe Bay Master Plan. This requires the Council to facilitate discussion between different stakeholders and users of the Bay to develop a common vision and make

recommendations to State and County leaders on matters regarding the use of Kāneʻohe Bay. The Council holds regular meetings where different organizations, agencies, and individuals engaging in activities in Kāneʻohe Bay can report regarding issues, concerns, and specific needs of the Bay. We also invite the general public to bring concerns to our attention so that we may work with government and community stakeholders to address them. During my first term on the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council, I have actively participated in these (and other) Council responsibilities.

3. Based on your understanding of the role and responsibilities of this position, please explain why you believe you are qualified to serve. Include a brief description of the skills, experience, expertise, or knowledge you would bring to the Council and how they would inform your decision-making.

My upbringing in and around Kāneʻohe Bay has given me a deep connection to and understanding of the issues affecting our Bay. I also believe that my educational and professional background will allow me to continue to be a valuable resource to the Council.

I earned my Bachelor of Arts (with Distinction) in Hawaiian Studies from the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa with a concentration in Mālama ʻĀina (Hawaiian Perspectives on Resource Management). I received my Juris Doctor from the William S. Richardson School of Law where I completed certificates in both Environmental Law and Native Hawaiian Law. Currently, I am an attorney specializing in complex civil litigation in the areas of Environmental and Native Hawaiian law and manage cases implicating a variety of environmental and cultural issues across Hawaiʻi pae ʻāina.

I believe these educational and professional experiences will allow me to assist the Council with making informed decisions and recommendations to best achieve the purpose of the Kāneʻohe Bay Master Plan. That is, to preserve and protect the unique natural resources of Kāneʻohe Bay for the continued enjoyment of present and future generations, to resolve conflicting use problems between users of the Bay, and to assess the environmental, cultural, and ecological impacts of activities on the Bay.

4. If confirmed, what goals or priorities would you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

If confirmed, I look forward to continuing the work I started during my first term. I currently serve on the Council committee working to review, revise, and update the

Kāneʻohe Bay Master Plan. This has been a multi-year process, and I hope to be able to work with the committee to complete our review and recommendations this year. I also serve as the Council's legislative chair, where my role as chair has been to track legislative bills that would affect Kāneʻohe Bay and provide testimony on behalf of the Council. I hope to be able to continue in this role for a second term. Lastly, I hope to be able to continue to collaborate with community stakeholders to improve the conditions of the Bay with the long-term goal of bringing back momona to our Bay and to our community.

- 5. Do you believe there is anything in your background, professional affiliations, financial interests, legal record, or prior work that could reasonably be perceived by the public as creating a conflict of interest or otherwise raise questions regarding your character, judgment, or ability to serve impartially on the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council? If so, please explain.**

No, I do not believe there is anything that could reasonably be perceived by the public as creating a conflict of interest or otherwise raise questions regarding my character, judgment, or ability to serve impartially on the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council.

Mahalo for your time and consideration of my nomination to the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council for a second term. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any further questions or would like me to provide any additional information.

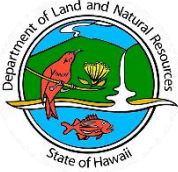
Aloha nui,



Elena L. Bryant

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA**

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
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BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
Acting Chairperson**

**Before the Senate Committee on
WATER, LAND, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 647
SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE KĀNE'OHE
BAY REGIONAL COUNCIL, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, ELENA BRYANT, FOR
A TERM TO EXPIRE 6-30-2029**

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports Governor's Message 647 nominating Ms. Elena Bryant to the Kāne'ōhe Bay Regional Council for a term to expire on June 30, 2029.

Pursuant to Section 200D-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, the Kāne'ōhe Bay Regional Council was established to, among other things, facilitate the implementation of the Kāne'ōhe Bay Master Plan as it relates to ocean use activities and advise and make recommendations to the State and the County on matters regarding the use of Kāne'ōhe Bay by the general public, marine research programs, and commercial ocean use activities, including legislative matters. Membership on the Council includes government officials, area neighborhood board members, and individuals representing user groups of the Bay.

Ms. Bryant is a senior attorney with extensive experience in Native Hawaiian and environmental law, regularly representing community organizations in complex litigation before Hawai'i's state and federal courts. Her background includes years of legal research, appellate work, and judicial clerking for multiple judges across the Hawai'i State Judiciary and the U.S. District Court, giving her deep familiarity with administrative, environmental, and resource-management issues. She has also contributed legal research and policy work for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and the Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law, with experience addressing land, water, and resource management concerns across Hawai'i. Ms. Bryant is an active community leader, serving on the Kāne'ōhe Neighborhood Board and as a voting member and Legislative Chair of the Kāne'ōhe Bay Regional Council since 2022. With her combination of legal expertise, cultural

knowledge, and direct community engagement, she brings a well-developed, resource-focused perspective to the stewardship of Kāneʻohe Bay.

The Department welcomes the wealth of knowledge and wisdom that Ms. Bryant will bring to the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support on the confirmation of Ms. Elena Bryant to serve on the Kāneʻohe Bay Regional Council.



SENATOR CHRIS LEE, CHAIR
SENATOR LORRAINE R. INOUE, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS

TESTIMONY IN **STRONG SUPPORT** OF GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 647

Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 1:00 p.m.
Conference Room 224, State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Dear Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members:

We submit this testimony in **strong support** of Governor's Message No. 647, the confirmation of Elena Bryant to the Kāne'ohe Bay Regional Council, for a term to expire on June 30, 2029. As a kupa 'āina (native) of Kāne'ohe and a lineal descendant of generations of lawai'a (fishers) on O'ahu, coupled with her years of experience as a Kāne'ohe Neighborhood Board member and as an environmental and Native Hawaiian law attorney, Elena will be an invaluable member of this Council.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Harley M. Broyles
Associate Attorney
Earthjustice, Mid-Pacific Office



SIERRA CLUB
OF HAWAII

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

March 18, 2026

1:00 PM

Conference Room 224

In SUPPORT of GM647: SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE KĀNE‘OHE BAY REGIONAL COUNCIL, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, ELENA BRYANT, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2029.

Aloha Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and Committee Members,

On behalf of our 20,000 members and supporters, the Sierra Club of Hawai‘i **SUPPORTS** GM647, which nominates Elena Bryant to the Kāne‘ohe Bay Regional Council (KBRC).

For decades, the KBRC and its members have diligently tracked, discussed, and taken action on myriad issues relating to Kāne‘ohe Bay, from illegal commercial and poaching activities, to the implementation of the Kāne‘ohe Bay Master Plan, to policy proposals affecting the health of the Bay, among many others. This work has been critical to maintaining strong regional community connections to the Bay, and to sustain its health and the benefits it provides to Windward O‘ahu’s food security, cultural practices, recreational opportunities, and local economy, particularly in the face of climate destabilization and the ever-increasing pressures and stressors of human activity.

As someone deeply embedded in the Windward O‘ahu community, and who also possesses legal and other specialized and relevant expertise, Ms. Bryant’s membership on the KBRC has been and will continue to be vital to facilitating its important work. For example, Ms. Bryant has a long history of community service and involvement with key community organizations including the Ko‘olaupoko Hawaiian Civic Club, the Kāne‘ohe Neighborhood Board, and local canoe clubs. She has also dedicated her career and life to public service and the public interest, with a particular focus on environmental and Native Hawaiian law. Given these attributes, Ms. Bryant would appear to be an ideal candidate to serve on the KBRC and assist in its work.

Accordingly, the Sierra Club respectfully but strongly urges the Committee to recommend that the Senate **ADVISE AND CONSENT** to the nomination of Elena Bryant to the KBRC.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify.