

April 10, 2026

TO: Senator Chris Lee
Senate District 25
415 S. Beretania St. Room 219
Honolulu, HI 96813, Ph: (808) 587-8388
senlee@capitol.hawaii.gov

RE: GM 649 - Nomination to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Aloha Senator Lee,

I am a dedicated advocate for sustainable fisheries and a prominent voice in Hawai'i marine resource management. As a Native Hawaiian and Commercial fisher based out of Hilo, I bring 40 plus years of industry, cultural and traditional experience to the table, ensuring the perspectives of our local Lawai'i are integrated into fisheries management.

Currently serving on the following: Interim Commissioner, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, Vice Chair, Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Councils' Advisory Panel, Advisor for State of Hawaii Fishers Working Group, Chair, East Hawai'i Fishers Working Group, Board of Director, Hilo Trollers. Through these leadership roles, I've been able to work at the intersection of community engagement and federal regulations, championing the interest of our islands' fishing communities while promoting the long-term health our Pacific marine ecosystem.

Mahalo,

Gil Kualii
2853 Pulelehua Place
Hilo, HI 96720, Ph: (808) 747-5064
Fisha808@gmail.com

1. Why do you wish to serve as a member of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission?
2. What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission?
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 Commission and how they would inform your decision-making.
4. If confirmed, what goals or priorities would you hope to accomplish during your term of service?
5. Do you believe there is anything 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 Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission? If so, please explain.

Please submit your written response to senlee@capitol.hawaii.gov

Please note that any testimony submitted to Senate committees on your behalf will be posted on the Legislature's website as submitted. You may wish to inform individuals intending to submit testimony in support of your nomination that all testimony is public. Your prompt response will help ensure that the Senate confirmation process proceeds in a timely manner. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



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

P.O. BOX 621
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FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

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

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

**Wednesday, April 15, 2026
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 224**

**In consideration of
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 649
SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE PACIFIC
STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,
GILBERT KUALI'I, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 6-30-2029**

The Department of Land and Natural Resources (Department) supports Governor's Message 649 nominating Mr. Gilbert Kualii to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) for a term to expire on June 30, 2029.

Pursuant to Act 216 (2024) and section 188C-1, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), on December 19, 2024, the Governor of Hawai'i executed a compact on behalf of the State to join the PSMFC. The PSMFC is an interstate compact agency that helps state resource management agencies and the fishing industry sustainably manage Pacific Ocean resources, particularly those that cross jurisdictional boundaries. The PSMFC's mission is to promote the better utilization of fisheries – marine, shell, and anadromous, which are of mutual concern, and to develop a joint program of protection and prevention of physical waste of such fisheries in all of those areas of the Pacific Ocean over which the compacting states jointly or separately now have or may hereafter acquire jurisdiction. This mission closely aligns with the mission of the Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources to work with the people of Hawai'i to manage, conserve, and restore the state's unique aquatic resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.

Mr. Kualii is a highly respected commercial fisherman from Hilo whose extensive, hands-on experience and deep-rooted connection to Hawai'i's marine resources make him exceptionally well-qualified for this role. Since retiring from the United States Navy in 2003,

Mr. Kualii has dedicated himself to the practice and perpetuation of fishing as a way of life. As a lawai'a, he brings practical expertise in a wide range of fishing methods, including spearfishing, throw net, trolling, palu ahi and ika shibi handlining, Kona crab harvesting, bottom fishing, and shore casting.

In addition to his fishing experience, Mr. Kualii has demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to public service through his involvement in numerous federal, state, and community-based organizations. He currently serves as Vice Chair for Hawai'i on the Western Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Council Advisory Panel, as an advisory member on the Department's informal Fishers Working Group, and as Chair of the East Hawai'i Fishers Working Group. He also serves as Vice President of the Hilo Trollers Fishing Club and is an active member of the Big Island Archers. These roles reflect his ability to effectively engage in collaborative decision-making processes and represent the interests of Hawai'i's fishing community.

As a Kanaka Maoli, Mr. Kualii brings a strong sense of kuleana to his work, particularly in advocating for the right to gather, the ethical stewardship of marine and natural resources, and equitable access to Hawai'i's nearshore and offshore fisheries. He has consistently emphasized the importance of transparency in government and meaningful engagement with local communities to build trust and improve resource management outcomes.

Mr. Kualii also offers a valuable perspective on the integration of traditional knowledge and contemporary science. He recognizes the importance of the best available scientific information, while also advocating for the inclusion of 'ike kupuna—knowledge derived from generations of cultural practice, observation, and experience—to inform balanced and effective management decisions.

The Department believes that Mr. Kualii's combination of practical experience, leadership, cultural grounding, and commitment to community engagement will make him an effective and impactful representative for the State of Hawai'i on the PSMFC. Further, his experience and expertise in traditional and customary native Hawaiian cultural fishing practices qualifies him to serve as the native Hawaiian cultural representative on the Commission pursuant to section 188C-3, HRS.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the Committee to support the confirmation of Mr. Gilbert Kualii to serve on the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

Zendo Kern
Hawai'i Island

April 13, 2026

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on
Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: GM 649 - Letter in Support of Gilbert Kualii Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

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

I am writing in **strong support** of the confirmation of Gilbert Kualii Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Gilbert brings deep knowledge and understanding of fisheries, along with the ability to clearly articulate the issues and work collaboratively with others to find thoughtful pathways forward. He has served our state well in this role, and I strongly support his continued service on the commission.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zendo Kern

GM-649

Submitted on: 4/13/2026 5:40:43 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/15/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Klayton Kubo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support