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February 28, 2026

To: Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair,
And members of the Committee on Health and Human Services

Testimony in Support of GM 706

As a community advocate and former Executive Director of Hawaii Youth Services Network, I support GM 706, which appoints Priti Tayal to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua'i Service Area Board.

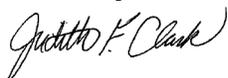
As the Community Programs Director at Hale 'Ōpio Kaua'i , she oversees a wide range of programs that focus on youth development, education, and prevention. She has over 20 years of experience in the mental health and community service fields.

For five years, I worked with Priti Tayal in a statewide homeless youth partnership. We have also collaborated to provide school and hygiene supplies and conduct a free book giveaway to Kauai children and youth.

Priti is dependable and hard working. She is knowledgeable about the needs and issues of Kauai families. She will be an asset and a strength as a member of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua'i Service Area Board.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Judith F. Clark, MPH

GM-706

Submitted on: 3/4/2026 11:40:35 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/6/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mel Rapozo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: The Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Senate

RE: Support for the Confirmation of Priti Tayal – Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua‘i Service Area Board

Dear Chair and Honorable Members:

I am writing in strong support of the confirmation of **Priti Tayal** to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua‘i Service Area Board.

Ms. Tayal brings decades of professional experience in behavioral health, clinical services, program development, and community leadership that make her exceptionally well qualified for this important role. She currently serves as Community Program Director at Hale ‘Opio Kaua‘i, Inc., where she develops and implements quality management strategies, oversees program services, leads continuous performance improvement efforts, and helps secure critical grant funding to sustain youth and family services across our island. Her leadership has directly strengthened systems of care for some of Kaua‘i’s most vulnerable populations.

Prior to her work on Kaua‘i, Ms. Tayal served in numerous clinical and supervisory roles in behavioral health organizations, including leadership positions overseeing wraparound services, outpatient programs, and functional behavioral assessments. She has supervised bachelor’s and master’s level clinicians, developed treatment plans, and provided therapy to individuals and families facing complex challenges. Her background reflects both hands-on clinical expertise and executive-level program management—an invaluable combination for a Service Area Board member.

In addition to her professional qualifications, Ms. Tayal has demonstrated a deep and sustained commitment to community service. She is a former Board President of Friendship House Kaua‘i, has served with the Kaua‘i Rural Health Association and Kaua‘i Mental Health Advocates, and currently chairs the Prevent Suicide Kaua‘i Task Force. Her involvement with the Children’s Community Council and anti-bullying initiatives reflects her proactive approach to prevention, early intervention, and cross-sector collaboration. She is also a certified instructor in Youth Mental Health First Aid and Sources of Strength, further underscoring her dedication to education and prevention.

Ms. Tayal understands that effective mental health and substance abuse policy must be data-informed, community-driven, culturally responsive, and collaborative. She has consistently demonstrated the ability to bring stakeholders together, analyze systems, and improve outcomes. Her experience in quality assurance, program oversight, and strategic planning will provide meaningful insight and accountability to the Service Area Board.

Kaua'i faces ongoing challenges related to mental health access, substance use disorders, youth behavioral health, and workforce capacity. We need leaders who not only understand these issues academically but who have worked on the front lines and within administrative systems to address them. Priti Tayal embodies that balance of compassion, competence, and leadership.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to confirm Priti Tayal to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua'i Service Area Board. She will serve with integrity, diligence, and a deep commitment to the well-being of our island community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Mel Rapozo