



GM712 Kathleen Merriam for State Council on Mental Health
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair
Senator Angus McKelvey, Vice Chair
Friday, Mar 6 2026: 1:00 pm : Rm 225 Videoconference

Hina Mauka strongly recommends Kathleen Merriam for State Council on Mental Health:

ALOHA CHAIR, VICE CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED COMMITTEE MEMBERS. My name is Alan Johnson. I am the ad hoc leader with the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition, providing support for services for substance use disorder and mental health disorders for adolescents and adults as well as recovery oriented services, harm reduction, and transitional housing including case management, and withdrawal management. HSAC services help all people from all islands.

We have known Kathleen Merriam since the late 1990's, after she started working with the Department of Health, Adult Mental Health Division.

Kathleen is a person with an uncommon, good heart, a collaborative attitude, and years of valuable experience. She has tremendous empathy for people including amazing insights into chronic mental health conditions.

Ms. Merriam has all the awesome attributes for being on the council: a strong sense of responsibility, practiced supervisor experience, years of information about coordination and collaboration of various service providers, professional leadership and training skills, as well as a technician's perspective for improving quality metrics.

HSAC highly recommends Kathleen Merriam for the State Council for Mental Health.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and are available for further questions.

GM-712

Submitted on: 3/3/2026 3:28:47 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Baker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

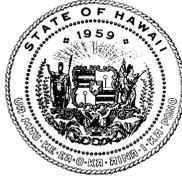
As President and CEO of Hina Mauka, I, Brian Baker, would like to support the nomination of Kathleen Merriam to the State Council on Mental Health.

As you are well aware, Kathleen's work as the Mental Health Supervisor for AMHD, through DOH, as well as her long history in other positions has rounded out her experience and expertise in a way few others can claim.

Kathleen is one of the most kind, competent, and collaborative people that you will ever meet. She is intensely dedicated to helping people with mental health challenges. When you combine those attributes with her incredible intellect and her strategic thought process, she will make an incredible contribution to this council.

I hereby wholeheartedly recommend Kathleen for the State Council for Mental Health.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



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KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A, M.P.H
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE



**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM712
Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the
State Council on Mental Health
Gubernatorial Nominee, KATHLEEN MERRIAM,
for a term to expire 06-30-2028**

SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR ANGUS L.K. MCKELVEY, VICE CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date and Time: March 6, 2026, 1:00 p.m. Location: Room 225 and Video

- 1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health ("Department") supports Kathleen Merriam's-
- 2 nomination and confirmation to the State Council on Mental Health ("Council").
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Hawaii Revised Statutes §334-10 provides for establishing the
- 4 State Council on Mental Health within the Department for administrative purposes to advise
- 5 the Department on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting two or
- 6 more service areas. It serves as an advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with
- 7 serious emotional disturbances, other individuals with mental illnesses or emotional problems,
- 8 and individuals with combined mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The Council's
- 9 mandate includes reviewing and commenting on the statewide comprehensive, integrated
- 10 service plan. It also serves as the State Planning Council for federal Mental Health Block Grant
- 11 program purposes. The Council can have up to twenty-one members, of which a majority
- 12 should be non-providers of mental health services. The majority should also be non-state
- 13 employees. The mandate seeks that all service area boards of the State are represented and
- 14 adequate representation of parents and children with serious emotional disturbances. It
- 15 requires the Council to have members from the principal state agencies concerning mental
- 16 health, education, vocational rehabilitation, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid, and social

1 services; Public and private entities concerned with the need, planning, operation, funding, and
2 use of mental health services and related support services; Adults with serious mental illnesses
3 who are receiving, or have received, mental health services; The families of such adults or
4 families of children with serious emotional disturbances; and the Hawaii Advisory Commission
5 on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.

6 Kathleen Rhoads Merriam will serve a second term, representing government seat for
7 behavioral health. She was chosen by her fellow members to and currently serves also as the
8 Council's first Vice Chairperson. She has shown strong leadership, expertise, and dedication,
9 making her highly qualified to continue as a member of the State Council on Mental Health.
10 Kathleen offers a unique perspective as a clinician, administrator, family member, and someone
11 in recovery. This background helps her connect policy, practice, and real-life experience. She is
12 known as a dedicated mental health advocate who supports compassionate, person-centered
13 care and creates opportunities for people living with mental illness to succeed. Kathleen also
14 goes the extra mile in helping the community address stigma, crises, and prevention.

15 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this nomination and your consideration of
16 Kathleen Merriam.