

KAREN KNUDSEN

Dear Senator Lee,

Thank you again for your email regarding my nomination to the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. It's an honor to be nominated, and if confirmed, I look forward to contributing to the Commission's work in advancing the State's international engagements.

Below are my responses to your questions regarding my nomination.

1. Why do you wish to serve as a member of the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission?

My entire professional life has centered on improving relationships and understanding between the United States and the Asia Pacific region, with a focus on the important and unique role that Hawaii plays.

2. What is your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission?

A member of the Commission serves in a volunteer capacity to help grow Hawaii's international relationships, including facilitating partnerships with foreign governments. The Commissioners will also provide support and advice to the Governor and the State Legislature regarding international affairs affecting Hawaii when requested.

3. Based on your understanding of the role and responsibilities of this position, please explain why you believe you are qualified to serve.

I've spent more than four decades working in the Asia Pacific region, beginning with my two years serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chuuk, FSM. Following my tour as a PCV, my career in Hawaii began as PAAC's Pacific Area Specialist, UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies Outreach Coordinator, and consulting for the Pacific Forum. My work at the East-West Center spanned 30 years, and I remain involved with the East-West Center as an Adjunct Senior Fellow, a member of the Center Foundation's Board of Directors, and a member of the EWC Alumni Executive Board.

My entire professional career has revolved around building relationships and understanding between the nations and people of the Asia Pacific region, and promoting Hawaii's international role. As director of the Office of External Affairs at the EWC, I led EWC's public engagement and public affairs activities. I worked with local, national, and international leaders, policymakers, diplomats, the media, and the Hawaii community. I also oversaw the EWC's Arts

Program and Alumni Affairs, and was the center's military liaison and specialist on Burma/Myanmar. At the heart of my work was engaging the broader Hawaii community by organizing policy-relevant dialogues, special events, and cultural activities reaching audiences ranging from K-12 students to business leaders, thought leaders, and the general public. In addition, concurrent with my role at the East-West Center, I also served as an elected member of the Hawaii State Board of Education for 20 years. In that capacity, I traveled throughout the State meeting with local communities, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, and government officials.

Although retired, I remain involved in community and international affairs. I'm currently serving my third year as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Japan-America Society of Hawaii (JASH). I also serve on the Board of Directors of the American Red Cross Pacific Islands Region (Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) and on the Pacific Forum's International Advisory Board. I'm also an Associate Member of the Consular Corps of Hawaii.

My cumulative experience, including extensive travel in the region -- South Asia, SE Asia, East and NE Asia, and the Pacific Islands, reinforces my belief that Hawaii is a unique and special place that successfully brings people from diverse backgrounds and cultures together for meaningful engagement. We've had proven successes over the years, and there are many more opportunities to explore.

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

If confirmed, I look forward to working with fellow Commission members to explore new opportunities for Hawaii's international engagements. With input from DBEDT, the Legislature, and the Governor's Office, we can develop a strategic vision for the Commission that maximizes Hawaii's strengths, including its location and welcoming culture. Nurturing existing Sister State relationships is also an important priority, as well as assessing potential new Sister State relationships.

5. Do you believe there is anything that could reasonably be perceived by the public as creating a conflict of interest or otherwise raising questions regarding your character, judgment, or ability to serve impartially on the Commission?

No. I don't see any conflict of interest in my serving on the Commission, etc., or my ability to serve impartially on the Commission. I believe my "character" is in good standing, and my judgment is sound.

Please let me know if you'd like additional information or require any clarification about my qualifications.

I look forward to seeing you on Thursday, April 23, at 1 pm. I will be attending the hearing on my nomination in person.

With appreciation and aloha,

Karen



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**

KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT DIVISION

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
DIRECTOR

DANE K. WICKER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

DENNIS T. LING
ADMINISTRATOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96804
Web site: dbedt.hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of
DENNIS T. LING
Administrator

Business Development and Support Division
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Thursday, April 23, 2026
1:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of
GM788

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and
International Partnerships Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, KAREN
KNUDSEN, for a term to expire 06-30-2030.**

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and members of the Committee. The Business Development and Support Division (BDSD) of the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) strongly supports GM788, which submits for consideration and confirmation Ms. Karen Knudsen to serve on the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

The Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission plays a vital role in strengthening Hawai'i's global relationships and engagement. Its responsibilities include reviewing and evaluating proposals for new sister-state and international partnerships; making recommendations to the Governor and Legislature; establishing criteria for determining the appropriateness and feasibility of proposed partnerships; monitoring existing agreements; facilitating governmental, cultural, educational, and business exchanges; and supporting DBEDT's international outreach and foreign delegation coordination.

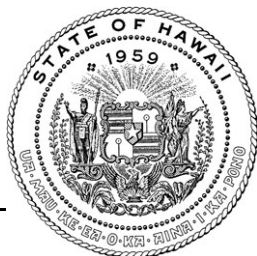
Ms. Knudsen brings four decades of extensive Asia-Pacific experience to the Commission, including over 30 years at the East-West Center (EWC), where she served as Director of the Office of External Affairs. In that capacity, she led major international conferences and worked closely with government officials, diplomats, media, and community stakeholders across the region. Her work overseeing the EWC Arts Program, Office of Alumni Affairs, and serving as military liaison and Burma/Myanmar specialist reflects her rare depth of understanding of the cultural, diplomatic, and geopolitical dynamics that shape Hawai'i's international partnerships.

Upon retiring from the East-West Center, Ms. Knudsen continues to serve as an adjunct senior fellow and remains active on the EWC Foundation Board of Directors and the EWC Association Executive Committee. Her ongoing community commitments—including work with the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, Pacific Forum's International Advisory Council, American Red Cross – Pacific Islands Region, and the Consular Corps of Hawai'i—underscore her sustained engagement in regional and international relations.

Ms. Knudsen's far-reaching leadership, global expertise, and lifelong dedication to strengthening Hawai'i's international relationships make her exceptionally well qualified to support the Commission's mission.

BDSD respectfully requests your favorable consideration and confirmation of Ms. Karen Knudsen to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804
Web site: dbedt.hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Statement of
James Kunane Tokioka
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON
WATER, LAND, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

Thursday, April 23, 2026
1:00 pm
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of
GM788
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and
International Partnerships Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee,
KAREN KNUDSEN, for a term to expire 06-30-2030.**

Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye, and members of the Committee,

I **strongly support** GM788, which requests the Senate's consideration and confirmation of Ms. Karen Knudsen to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

The Commission's responsibilities include reviewing and evaluating proposals for new sister-state and international partnerships, recommending actions to the Legislature and Governor, establishing criteria to ensure diplomatic and cultural alignment, monitoring existing agreements, facilitating exchanges, and supporting DBEDT's international outreach.

Ms. Knudsen brings more than four decades of direct Asia-Pacific experience, including 30 years at the East-West Center, where she served as Director of the Office of External Affairs, overseeing international conferences, public engagement, alumni affairs, military liaison responsibilities, and regional diplomatic initiatives.

Her ongoing community and professional work includes leadership roles with the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the Pacific Forum International Advisory Council, the American Red Cross – Pacific Islands Region, the Consular Corps of Hawai'i, Yushinkai Hawai'i, and the Public Diplomacy Council of America.

DBEDT Testimony

GM 788

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Ms. Knudsen previously served 20 years on the Hawai'i State Board of Education, contributed to multiple nonprofit and educational organizations, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Micronesia. Her extensive regional expertise, public service, and global relationship-building make her strongly suited to serve on this Commission.

I respectfully request your favorable consideration and confirmation of Ms. Karen Knudsen. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Testimony of Celeste A. Connors
President, East-West Center

**In Support of GM788: Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the
Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission**
Gubernatorial Nominee: Karen Knudsen

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee:

The East-West Center is pleased to offer its **strong support** for the confirmation of **Karen Knudsen** to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Karen Knudsen brings more than four decades of experience advancing Hawai'i's engagement across the Indo-Pacific. Her distinguished career includes 30 years at the East-West Center, where she served as Director of External Affairs and led the Center's public engagement, international convenings, and partnerships with government leaders, diplomats, and communities across Hawai'i and the region.

Karen's deep understanding of international relations is matched by her ability to build and sustain meaningful relationships. She has worked at the intersection of policy, diplomacy, and community, strengthening ties that reflect Hawai'i's unique role as a bridge between the United States and the Indo-Pacific. Her leadership has extended beyond the Center through service on numerous boards and organizations dedicated to international cooperation, education, and public diplomacy.

Her longstanding commitment to public service, including two decades as an elected member of the Hawai'i State Board of Education, reflects a deep dedication to the people of Hawai'i and to future generations. She brings not only global expertise, but also a strong grounding in local community needs and priorities.

Karen's experience, integrity, and collaborative approach make her exceptionally well-suited to serve on the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

For these reasons, the East-West Center respectfully urges the Committee to confirm Karen Knudsen's nomination.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/20/2026 11:37:02 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ricardo D Trimillos	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the appointment of Ms. Karen Knudsen to the Hawaii State Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Her successful career at the East-West Center has given her an incredible network of community, political, and cultural leaders throughout the Pacific and Asia which will serve the Commission well, as it has previous organizations she has been with including the Pacific Forum and the Japan-America Society of Honolulu. Having experienced the Peace Corps in Micronesia and a long-time resident of the State Ms. Knudsen is akamai about protocol and pono on cultural sensibilities. As the head of the EWC outreach office she is well organized and well-spoken. She is a winner!

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 1:15:47 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Patricia Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly recommend Karen Knudsen for the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission,

While serving as the Administrative Assistant to the President of the East-West Center, I've worked closely with Karen for over 30+ years as she was the Center's community media and outreach spokesperson.

Karen brings a global perspective, strong communication skills, and a genuine commitment to building meaningful international relationships. She has a proven ability to connect across cultures, think strategically, and represent Hawaii with professionalism and integrity.

Her leadership and passion for strengthening Hawaii's global partnerships make her an excellent choice and a valuable asset to the commission.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 2:27:15 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Molly Schmidt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I, Molly Schmidt, a resident of O'ahu fully support this nomination of Karen Knudsen for this role. Her extensive experience is more than well suited to serve. Additionally, while I am submitting approval as an individual, I serve as the CEO of the American Red Cross, Pacific Islands Region where Karen serves on the Board of Directors, and her involvement in the board is a valuable resource.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 5:01:49 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sharon Lucien	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

788 GM Submitting for confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, KAREN KNUDSEN, for a term to expire 06-30-2030.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 8:38:34 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlene Chan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. I am in support of Karen Knudsen to be considered for confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Ms. Knudsen has served her community and the State of Hawai'i extensively for many years with her knowledge, time, compassion and experience of international affairs and the State of Hawai'i. She has done work with the East-West Center, the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, the Pacific Forum, amongst others. Karen Knudsen would be an asset to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 8:55:55 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg Knudsen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha to members of the Senate Water, Land, Culture and the Arts Committee,

With my totally unbiased perspective, I wholeheartedly support the appointment of my wife, **Karen Knudsen**, to the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

She has a wealth of pertinent personal and professional experience:

- In 36 years at the East-West Center, mostly as director of EWC's Office of External Affairs and currently as an adjunct senior fellow, Karen has been immersed in international and intercultural issues on a local, national, regional, and global level;
- She is the current board chairperson of the Japan-America Society of Hawaii, which presented a successful Hawaii-Japan Sister Summit (both state and city) in Honolulu in 2023 and will stage its upcoming encore in May 2026;
- She is an active associate member of the Consular Corps of Hawaii, and an international advisory board member for the Pacific Forum;
- Karen garnered 20 years of government experience as an elected member of Hawaii's State Board of Education, which included extensive legislative- and executive-branch interaction;
- While earning a master's degree in Pacific Islands Studies, Karen worked as outreach coordinator for the University of Hawaii's Center for Pacific Islands Studies, with additional Asia-Pacific engagement through the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council;
- She lived two years in a local village overseas to teach high school classes as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia; and,
- Karen has traveled widely throughout the Asia-Pacific region and parts of Europe, with a deep knowledge and appreciation of global affairs and intercultural relations.

Mahalo for supporting the nomination and appointment of Karen Knudsen to the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Aloha, *Greg Knudsen*

Former Hawaii Department of Education communications director, Governor's Office of International Relations administrative assistant, Pacific Magazine editor, University of Hawaii & East-West Center alumnus, and Peace Corps Volunteer in Micronesia

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 9:24:58 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline L Mackenzie	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Wholeheartedly support the nomination of Karen Knudsen. Dedicated, committed, and most excellent person. Karen is a returned peace corps volunteer, a member of our Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Hawaii, fully participates in our group. She is a retired executive of the East West Center.

I met Karen because of our Peace Corps connection. Just a lovely lady. Mahalo for letting me share and recommend Karen for this position.

Caroline L. Mackenzie

President, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Hawai'i

ZACHARY ESPINO

April 21, 2026

In Support of GM788: Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in **strong support** of Karen Knudsen's nomination.

For nearly the past four years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with Karen through her role as Adjunct Senior Fellow in the Office of the President at the East-West Center. During this time, I have come to appreciate not only her extensive experience, but also the way she approaches her work with thoughtfulness, humility, and a clear commitment to strengthening Hawai'i's role in the region.

Karen has a unique ability to connect people across sectors and cultures. Whether engaging with regional partners, advising on complex issues, or supporting institutional priorities, she brings a steady and practical approach grounded in decades of experience. She understands that strong international partnerships are built on trust and long-term relationships.

What stands out most to me is her investment in people. Karen has been a consistent source of guidance and encouragement for those of us who are earlier in our careers. She leads by example and has helped shape a culture of mentorship that prioritizes the next generation of leaders who care deeply about Hawai'i and the Indo Pacific.

Her continued service in the community reflects the same values of commitment, collaboration, and a genuine desire to make a positive impact.

Karen would be an outstanding addition to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. I respectfully support her confirmation and thank you for your consideration.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 9:45:33 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Greg and Pat Farstrup	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Karen has years of experience promoting Hawai'i's international role through her work with the East-West Center, the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, the Pacific Forum, and others.

Please appoint Karen Knudsen to this Commission.

Mahalo.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 11:02:59 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noreen Tanouye	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I endorse Karen Knudsen for this nomination. She brings decades of relevant experience from her work at the East-West Center and her service on the boards of many similar organizations. She would be an excellent addition.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 11:35:33 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charles Morrison	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having worked many years with Karen Knudsen as a colleague, strongly support this nomination. Has outstanding qualifications - experience, record of public service, dedication, ability to strengthen and make meaningful these often under-utilized sister relationships. Charles Morrison

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 12:06:48 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Derek Ferrar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha! As a former longtime colleague of Karen Knudsen at the East-West Center, I cannot image a better person to serve on the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. Karen has devoted her distinguished career to building international ties for Hawai'i, which in addition to her many years as EWC's public affairs director has included service with the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, the Pacific Forum, and other internationally focused organizations. In addition, her in-depth knowledge of state stakeholders as a longtime member of the Board of Education and in other public service positions makes her an ideal nominee to serve on this commission. I urge you confirm her appointment unanimously. Mahalo!

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 12:34:51 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Vicki L Shambaugh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support Karen Knudsen's nomination to the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. I have worked with Karen on for over 35 years on international issues and associations. Karen brings a long history in promoting Hawaii's international role especially in the Pacific and Asia. She does so with diplomacy and grace while accomplishing the task at hand.

Letter of Support for the Nomination of Karen Knudsen
to the Hawai'i State Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Senate,

I write with deep respect and wholehearted enthusiasm in support of the nomination of Ms. Karen Knudsen to serve on the Hawai'i State Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission, as submitted by Governor Josh Green. I can think of no candidate more qualified—or more deeply committed to Hawai'i's global role—than Karen.

Karen brings to this position not only an impressive breadth of professional experience, but also a lifelong dedication to fostering international understanding and cooperation. Her work with the East-West Center has long exemplified Hawai'i's unique role as a bridge between Asia, the Pacific, and the United States. Through this and her many other affiliations, she has consistently demonstrated an ability to translate vision into meaningful partnerships.

Her leadership and engagement with organizations such as the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the University of Hawai'i Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, and the Pacific Forum reflect both depth and continuity in her commitment to international engagement. These are not casual affiliations; they represent years of thoughtful participation, leadership, and impact.

What sets Karen apart is her ability to weave together diplomacy, education, cultural exchange, and community engagement into a coherent and forward-looking vision. She understands that sister-state relationships are not symbolic gestures, but living partnerships that require care, cultural sensitivity, and sustained effort. Her experience equips her to strengthen these ties in ways that benefit Hawai'i economically, culturally, and diplomatically.

Equally important is Karen's personal integrity, warmth, and collaborative spirit. She listens deeply, builds trust across cultures, and brings people together with grace and purpose. In a world that increasingly calls for thoughtful global connection, Karen embodies the very values this Commission seeks to advance.

I strongly urge the Hawai'i State Senate to confirm her appointment. Karen Knudsen will not only serve with distinction—she will elevate the work of the Commission and help ensure that Hawai'i continues to thrive as a vital crossroads of the Pacific.

Respectfully submitted,
Tin Myaing Thein, Ph.D

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 2:31:33 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
robert Dunahay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Karen Knudsen.

Robert Dunahay

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 4:33:45 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shannon Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

This testimony strongly supports the nomination of Karen Knudsen to serve on the Hawai‘i Sister State and International Partnership Commission. Ms. Knudsen brings a well-established record of advancing Hawai‘i’s global engagement, underpinned by substantive experience across policy, education, and international exchange.

Through her work with the East-West Center, she has helped elevate Hawai‘i’s role as a convening hub for Indo-Pacific dialogue and cooperation. Her engagement with the Japan-America Society of Hawai‘i reflects a sustained commitment to strengthening one of Hawai‘i’s most important bilateral relationships. In addition, her contributions to the UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, and the Pacific Forum demonstrate both depth and breadth in regional expertise, youth engagement, and strategic policy dialogue.

Collectively, this portfolio positions Ms. Knudsen to add immediate value to the Commission’s mandate. She brings not only a strong professional network across Asia and the Pacific, but also a nuanced understanding of how subnational diplomacy, educational exchange, and public-private partnerships can be leveraged to advance Hawai‘i’s economic, cultural, and strategic interests. Her appointment would reinforce the Commission’s capacity to execute high-impact international partnerships and further solidify Hawai‘i’s leadership role in the Indo-Pacific.

For these reasons, I strongly urge confirmation of Karen Knudsen’s nomination.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/21/2026 5:56:18 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Hartman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to strongly support Karen Knudsen's confirmation to the Hawai'i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. I worked with Karen for 20 years at the East-West Center and for the past three years in association with the Japan-America Society of Hawaii. Karen has dedicated her life to building international partnerships, from her Peace Corps work in the Pacific to her dedicated work for EWC and Hawaii's other international organizations. She has contacts and friendships in nearly every country across the Indo-Pacific region, knows the region's cultures and people, and is a terrific asset for our state in building international partnerships and fostering strong Sister-State relationships.

Letter of Support for the Nomination of Karen Knudsen

April 22, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Hawai'i State Senate,

I am writing to offer my strong and enthusiastic support for the confirmation of Karen Knudsen, an outstanding nominee to serve on the Hawai'i State Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Karen brings a rare and deeply valuable combination of energy, experience, and genuine commitment to fostering meaningful international relationships. Her work in both local and global arenas reflects not only a sophisticated understanding of diplomacy, but also a practical ability to translate vision into lasting partnerships. As a result, she is widely respected, and many in our community and among our international partners seek her advice.

For example, she has contributed significantly to advancing Hawai'i's international role through her work with the East-West Center, the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the University of Hawai'i Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, the Pacific Forum, the Consular Corps of Hawai'i, and other respected organizations. Through active participation and leadership, she has demonstrated a consistent dedication to strengthening ties across cultures and regions, with a clear appreciation for the importance of people-to-people connections in building trust and collaboration.

Further, Karen's experience spans engagement at every level—from community-based initiatives to high-level international interactions. She has worked with global leaders from many countries over the years and moves with ease in diplomatic circles, while remaining equally effective in grassroots and community settings.

Equally important is her proven ability to navigate complex bureaucratic systems with professionalism and effectiveness. She understands protocols, including culture-specific protocols, respects institutional processes, and knows how to move initiatives forward while maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders across sectors. This skill set is essential for the success of the Sister-State Commission, where diplomacy, coordination, and persistence are key. Based on my own experience working with international and national organizations, as well as across multiple levels of government to advance initiatives and navigate complex bureaucracies, I recognize and value these skills as essential for program success.

Beyond her credentials and experience, she recognizes the deeper values at the heart of Hawai'i's sister-state relationships—mutual respect, cultural exchange, and shared growth. She approaches this work not as a formality, but as an opportunity to actively cultivate partnerships that benefit the people of Hawai'i and its international counterparts. She also brings a notable sense of humility and approachability; people genuinely enjoy working with her and trust her leadership, which further strengthens the relationships she helps build.

In confirming Karen Knudsen, you can be assured that she will contribute meaningfully to the Commission's mission and expand Hawai'i's global connections in impactful ways. For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to confirm her nomination.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Midori Akamine, Esq.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 8:45:40 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
James F. Moriarty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have worked in related fields for decades, and I can not think of anyone more qualified, or who would do a better job on the Sister-State and International Partnerships commission than Karen Knudsen would. She is meticulous in her work, is a master of the substance of that work and has developed networks of partners and friends throughout the IndoPacific that would be invaluable to the Commission going forward.

HON. PATRICIA M. LOUI
c/o Pioneer Plaza Suite 1718
900 Fort Street Mall
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96821

April 22, 2026

The Honorable Chris Lee, Chair
The Honorable Lorraine R. Inouye, Vice Chair
Committee on Water, Land, Culture and the Arts
Hawai'i State Senate
Re: GM788 Support
Via email submission

Dear Chair Lee and Vice Chair Inouye:

Mahalo to you and members of the Water, Land, Culture and the Arts Committee of the Hawaii State Senate for hearing this bill GM 788 to confirm Governor Green's appointment of Karen Knudsen to the Hawaii State Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Karen is eminently qualified to meaningfully contribute to the work of this Commission. She has a long history promoting Hawaii's international role through her distinguished work with the East-West Center, the Japan-America Society of Hawai'i, the UH Center for Pacific Islands Studies, the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, and the Pacific Forum.

She is a hardworking, dedicated professional with both deep knowledge and a wide network in the Indo-Pacific region. Having served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Pacific Islands, she also has first-hand lived experience of the culture, lifestyle and needs of Asia Pacific. I have no doubt that she will be an invaluable resource for the State.

It is a pleasure to strongly support Ms. Knudsen's appointment, and to respectfully request support for her confirmation from this distinguished committee. With aloha, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Pat Loui

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 9:42:45 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Peters-Nguyen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Members of the Hawaii State Senate. I am pleased to support the Governor's nomination of Karen Knudsen to the Hawaii Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. I can think of no one more qualified than Karen to serve in this capacity. Her decades of experience with the East-West Center, service as Japan-America Society's chair, as well as numerous other organizations, effectively promoted Hawaii's international role.

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 9:52:06 AM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Moriarty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Karen Knudsen is the perfect choice to serve on the Hawai‘i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission. I can think of no individual who has done more over the past decades than Karen has to foster Hawai‘i’s sister-state and international partnerships.

Karen has helped sustain and grow Hawai‘i’s ties at an institutional level—for example, through her work at the East-West Center and Japan-America Society of Hawai‘i. She sees the big picture vision and, from decades of experience, the work needed to move from vision to results in the real world. At a personal level, Karen is a ubiquitous and always positive presence at programs and events in Hawai‘i that advance and nurture global connections. She continues to do faithfully the day-to-day work of traveling internationally to keep fresh our State’s relationships with old friends of Hawai‘i and forge new friendships.

I have known and worked with Karen since the 1980’s, including serving together with her on the boards of organizations supporting Hawai‘i’s international engagement. I strongly support her nomination to serve on the Hawai‘i Sister-State and International Partnerships Commission.

Me ka ha‘aha‘a a me ke aloha,

Lauren Moriarty

GM-788

Submitted on: 4/22/2026 12:00:23 PM

Testimony for WLA on 4/23/2026 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robb Whitman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Is it at this time that I submit my testimony on behalf of Karen Knudsen for the position of Hawaii Sister State and International Partnership Commission

I have witnessed first hand over the past 15 years how Karen interacts with Academics, Politicians, Noble Peace prize recipients and Media professionals. Karen's work at EWC constantly put her in close contact with talented individuals from around the world.

As a program alumni of the East West centers International Media Conferences held in Hong Kong(2010) ,Myanmar (2014), Singapore(2018) and recently in Manila(2024) I marveled at Karen's incredible ability and talent at connecting people from diverse backgrounds for a better understanding of the issues that effect the world today.

I highly recommend her for this important position.

The State of Hawaii will be the beneficiary from her knowledge, insight and international experience .

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Robert Whitman
Media Solutions Inc
Honolulu Hawaii