

GM 508

SHEILA L. CALCAGNO

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Kaua `i Service Area Board, Gubernatorial Nominee, SHEILA L. CALCAGNO, for a term to expire 6-30-2011.

Hawaii Senate Committee on Health
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 215
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

April 2, 2009

Dear Members of the Senate Health Committee:

Aloha. My name is Sheila Calcagno and I have been a member of the Kauai community for the past fourteen years. I would like to become a member of the board so that I can be a voice for the people who have no voice. I would like to help change the stigma behind mental illness and the societal judgments that criticize being different. I also know the challenges folks with mental illness face everyday and understand what it is like for them to survive in a complicated world.

I will be an asset to the Board as I will help assist in working toward change within the system and that I would strive to improve service delivery to the population in the Kauai community. I want to help "humanize" this population and help educate people on the challenges people with mental illness encounter. I want to be an advocate for the oppressed and vulnerable population. I would like to help individuals improve their health and lives by reducing harm that can result from their circumstances and behaviors.

I believe I am qualified because of my own life experience. I have fought the battle of mental illness myself. I have been hospitalized for depression and suicide. Although this was many, many years ago, I remember the feeling of a "black hole you can never climb out of." I feel very fortunate to have made it out. In addition, I have seen both my brother, sister and cousin take their lives as a result of substance abuse and mental illness. I have also experienced, first-hand, mental illness with my sons. One of my sons is in a dual-diagnosis program in Kona, and my other son lives with Schizophrenia. As a result of my life experiences, I can relate to what many folks in our communities are facing. I believe it is now my responsibility to help.

I am a skilled outreach worker who has learned Harm Reduction and helping people start where they are at and recognize that any small change is a positive step. I have taken the NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) 12-week Course. I am an HIV/ AIDS Educator and am trained in Hepatitis and Blood-borne Pathogen transmission. I teach health education and give referrals to vulnerable and depressed members of our community.

By serving on the Board, I hope to accomplish change that will empower people with mental illness and connect people with the services that they need. Educating the community about the adversity a person with mental illness faces would be a great accomplishment for me. I would also like to help service providers develop a greater understanding of harm reduction and empathy toward people who self-medicate to ease their pain and mind.

There are three qualities that I think make me stand out: 1) *Charisma* – I have an outgoing personality; 2) *Experience* – The relevancy of my own journey makes it easy for me to relate to my clients – I work on the front lines everyday to provide health education and support and am not just reading about mental illness from a book; and 3) *Integrity* - makes I am committed to helping individuals with their recovery process.

The one experience that makes me stand out is that I am alive. I survived the “black hole.” I learned through this experience, made positive changes in my life and now want to be of service to others.

I do not foresee any conflicts of interest. However, if I did, I would approach the board. I would be open and honest in finding solutions to any problems that could arise.

Lastly, I believe it is my kuleana to give back, offer my life experience and share my mana'o. Thank you for your time in processing my request.
I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Sheila Calcagno

LINDA LINGLE
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO, M.D.
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
P.O. Box 3378
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96801-3378

In reply, please refer to:
File:

Senate Committee on Health

**GM 508, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE TO THE MENTAL HEALTH AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE, KAUAI SERVICE AREA BOARD**

**Testimony of Chiyome Leinaala Fukino, M.D.
Director of Health**

April 15, 2009, 2:45 p.m.

1 **Department's Position:** The Department of Health supports the nomination of Sheila L. Calcagno
2 to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Oahu Service Area Board.

3 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

4 **Purpose and Justification:** Ms. Calcagno, a family representative, has lived in Hawaii for thirty-four
5 years and has been a member of the Kauai community for the past fourteen years. Employed for the last
6 eight years by the Community Health Outreach Work to Prevent AIDS Project (CHOW Project), Ms.
7 Calcagno is the sole project outreach worker on Kauai. In this role, she provides the community, particularly
8 the homeless, with harm reduction philosophies and strategies to improve their health including prevention
9 of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and other bloodborne pathogens among high risk drug users. Ms. Calcagno's life
10 experiences are most relevant to the issues and concerns of the Kauai Service Area Board on Mental Health
11 and Substance Abuse including membership in the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). She also
12 has a certificate in Human Services from the University of Hawaii, Hilo, has a certificate for HAZMAT
13 transportation, and has completed a four-year term on the Community Planning Board for HIV (Oahu).

14 Thank you for your positive consideration of this nomination.