

TESTIMONY

GM670

**HTH
Committee Hearing
03-07-2012**

TESTIMONY
of
Michael S. Okamoto

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Wednesday, March 7, 2012 at 1:30 P.M.

In Consideration of
Governor's Message 670 (GM670)
Relating to the Appointment of Michael Okamoto

Aloha Chair Green, Vice Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your Committee, and to Governor Abercrombie for my nomination.

I have provided responses to the questions contained in your letter dated February 24, 2012, and am willing to provide any additional information.

(1) Why do you wish to be a member of the *Disability and Communication Access Board*?

I would like to be a member of the Disability and Communication Access Board ("DCAB") so I may continue to work with a group of residents sharing a common goal of providing a greater level of access for persons with disabilities. In my view equivalency of experience and access is the goal. The Disability and Communication Access Board works to ensure that this goal is achieved.

(2) How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the *Disability and Communication Access Board*?

Members of the DCAB come from diversified backgrounds both personally and professionally. Members draw from their experience to serve as advocates for those with disabilities by creating guidelines addressing accessibility as related to design, communication access, and parking.

(3) Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the *Disability and Communication Access Board*, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the *Disability and Communication Access Board*.

I was born and raised in Hawaii, and graduated from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, School of Architecture in 1993. I have approximately nineteen years of experience in the architectural profession, and have been a Principal at the architectural firm of Next Design LLC for the past six years.

Over the years, the scope of work for my projects ranged from the installation of an entrance door to a building to the design of a 65,000 square foot fitness center, or 88,000 square foot medical clinic. Accessibility has always been an integral part of all my design projects. I offer practical experience specific to architectural design and related design elements, and would complement the existing members on DCAB, and its standing Committee on Facility Access.

(4) What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

I would have served DCAB and residents of Hawaii well if I help it provide an equitable level of access for persons challenged to live with disabilities, and ensure that it is provided in a fair and reasonable manner.

(5) Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the *Disability and Communication Access Board*?

I would not say that the qualities that I list would make me stand out as the previous and existing members of DCAB are exemplary advocates for persons with disabilities. However, I believe that my strong traits are that I am Balanced, Practical and Thorough, and will rely on these to ensure that equitable access it provided for our citizens.

(6) Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the *Disability and Communication Access Board*?

My work with my current office Next Design has afforded me the opportunities to work on many healthcare related projects. In these projects it is easier to see the benefits of good accessible design practices and their real-time functionality.

(7) Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the *Disability and Communication Access Board*? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

The opportunity for a conflict of interest on my part may arise if I were to seek an interpretative opinion from the Board on a design inquiry. The resolution would be to recuse myself from discussing or voting on the specific interpretation. Also, Staff will provide their recommended interpretation, and as needed seek input from the U.S. Access Board, and or U.S. Department of Justice. The interpretative opinions published by DCAB are consistent with intent of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design on a national level.

I humbly ask for your support of my nomination to the Disability and Communication Access Board.

Thank you.



NEXT DESIGN

February 29, 2012

Emailed Testimony to: Josh Green, Chair Senate Committee on Health

Subject: Michael Okamoto Appointment
Disability and Communications Access Board (DCAB)

Dear Senator Green,

I am writing in support of the confirmation of Michael Okamoto to the Disability and Communications Access Board (DCAB) beginning this fiscal year, July 1, 2012.

I have worked with Michael Okamoto for over 15 years and he has always demonstrated a wealth of knowledge regarding the Americans with Disability Act. He is also very diligent, reliable and objective. I believe that Michael Okamoto will be a very responsible board member.

I urge you to support the confirmation of Michael Okamoto for the DCAB Board.

Sincerely,
NEXT DESIGN LLC

Stanford C. Lee, AIA
Principal/Manager

March 1, 2012

TO: Chair Green, Vice Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee

FROM: Gary Nishioku

RE: TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Governor's Message 670 – Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the Disability and Communication Access Board; Gubernatorial Nominee

Michael S. Okamoto

Aloha Chair Green, Vice Chair Nishihara and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity of submitting testimony in support of Michael Okamoto to the Disability and Communication Access Board.

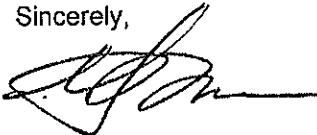
I shall call him "Mike" since I have known him for many years – from his early beginnings in architecture to a most prominent member of the architectural community. His experiences with various types of commercial projects has given him an extraordinary wide berth in addressing accessibility concerns as it relates to new and renovated projects.

I had the rare privilege of working with Mike as an architectural co-worker, and as a client with Kaiser Permanente, and now with my duties at Kamehameha Schools as a Capital Program Manager. In my experiences, Mike brought exceptional diligence and an understanding of the issues at hand and was quick to render a proper design solution with his background in life safety and accessibility.

Working with healthcare on a national level with Kaiser Permanente, Mike represented the firm of Next Design, LLC as the project architect and delivered the new Waipio Clinic (86,000 sf) under budget and on schedule. To this day, the Waipio Clinic is regarded as one of the flagships of Kaiser Permanente, not just in design, but the proper way to manage and deliver a project.

I do not consider my career as an architect complete – there is far too much to do and to learn. My life experiences with companies like Kaiser Permanente and Kamehameha Schools can only serve to make me better. In view of this, I am looking forward to many, many years of working with Mike on other projects, and perhaps now, as DCAB board member serving the greater community.

Sincerely,



Gary Nishioku, AIA