

Liza Simon-Tuiolosega

LATE TESTIMONY

Committee meeting

Re: HTH, GM705

Conference Room 229, 1:30 pm, March 12, 2012

Nominee for the Health Planning Council, Honolulu Subarea

Contact: 864-0527

1. Why do I wish to be a member of HONSAC?

Based on my experiences as a journalist, teacher, parent and caretaker of elderly parents, and a 30-year resident of Hawaii nei, I see healthcare as an integral issue of both civic life and quality of life in our Islands. To the extent that quality healthcare enables wellness, it is the driver of excellence in our education system and expansion in our economy, the foundation of the democratic process. Common sense tells us that healthy people are more likely to have the stamina to strive for personal goals and community progress. Few would argue that quality healthcare is the foundation of individual health.

However, through my activities as a journalist and in my current position with the Office of Student, Equity, Excellence and Diversity, I have observed factors that are jeopardizing equal access to quality healthcare. I've seen the evidence that this, in turn, fuels the already existing problem of health disparities among disadvantaged or vulnerable populations. For example, as reporter for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs newspaper, I gave coverage to many studies showing the disproportionately high rates of chronic diabetes affecting Native Hawaiians. These same studies also describe health disparities in chronic affecting immigrants, frail elderly, and large portions of people in neighbor island or rural areas of the Islands. And the studies further suggest that improving access to healthcare would help eliminate or reduce the disparities.

I am sure you agree this situation is unconscionable from a social justice standpoint. It is also bad economics because the chronic disease burden on the most vulnerable members of our community ultimately shifts costs to taxpayers and strains the healthcare system.

I seek membership in the Health Planning Council, Honolulu Subarea, because this body plays an important role in increasing access to healthcare and in ensuring that cost and quality of health services are tailored to the needs of specific communities. In helping to uphold these responsibilities, I see the council as ultimately contributing to the elimination of health disparities that, if left unchecked, threaten the storied diversity that makes Hawaii an appealing place to call home.

As a member of the Health Planning Council, Honolulu Subarea, I see myself as being able to use tools of communication to bridge effectively between my geographic area and the State Health Planning and Development Agency when important healthcare decisions require us all to be informed. This applies to my role in conducting reviews and making recommendations in the following HONSAC duties: Administration of the State's Certificate-of-Need (CON) program; review, comment and implementation of the State's Health Services and Facilities Plan; investigations into healthcare costs; recommendations regarding healthcare cost containment; assessment of health planning activities, prioritization of Hawaii's healthcare needs.

I believe that I qualify to serve as a member of the Health Planning Council, Honolulu Subarea, because I bring to the job more than twenty years of journalism and nearly ten years of government service that give me a keen awareness of the events and people who have shaped

today's Hawaii. My skills as a reporter and writer enable expertise in validating claims, elucidating facts, discerning cause and effect in sequences of public events and articulating all the aforementioned with a commitment to impartiality, regardless of personal bias. As a journalist I have sought to shed light difficult healthcare and health-related topics, by giving voice to the voiceless, including PTSD-affected Native Hawaiian veterans, low-income and elderly dialysis patients in need of services, and incarcerated women who have been victims of domestic violence

As for the other professional experience that I would bring to the Health Council-- My service to State Government, includes contracts and/or civil service exempt appointments involving communications, research and public outreach duties with the following agencies: the Department of Land and Natural Resources, the Hawaii State Department of Health, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and, currently, the Office of Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity (SEED) at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In all these positions, I have gained experience in building partnerships between the public-at-large and government services. With the tools of media, including the publication of articles in major media and the scriptwriting and production of video products, I take pride in helping to build bridges of understanding between groups— whether between cultures or between citizens and their public servants.

As a public servant—for the Department of Health, I worked as the Pandemic Outreach and Information Coordinator. As such I had the opportunity to receive training from the Centers for Disease Control in Crisis, Emergency and Risk Communications. I learned new strategies for effective messaging on healthcare information during public health emergencies, when accuracy and timeliness are literally key to saving lives. The primary lesson reinforced in this training is that healthcare is an emotional issue, dear to everyone of us. When we come to the table to make decisions, we must come together, ready to listen with respect to the whole range of opinions and emotions expressed by the community. I am ready and able to do this, as a member of the Health Planning Council, whether we are looking at financial impact of a single healthcare facility or a call for sweeping change in the State's Health Services and Facilities Plan.



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MĀNOA

February 23, 2012

Senator Josh Green, M.D.
Senate District 3
Hawaii State Capitol
Room 222
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Simon, Elizabeth

Honorable Senator Green,

I am a tenured Associate Specialist at the University of Hawaii at Manoa within the Office of Student Affairs, and Director of the Graduate Professional Access Program. I am the Principal Investigator for two United States Department of Education funded programs, Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program, and the Manoa Education Talent Search Program. Additionally, I have assisted in the administration of research and training programs funded by the National Institutes of Health and National Science Foundation within the past ten years. I serve as a steersperson for the Alpha Lambda Chapter of the Pacific for Graduate Women in Science, the national professional society for women in science with graduate research degrees.

Please accept my sincere endorsement of Elizabeth Simon's nomination to serve on the STATE HEALTH PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY COMMISSION. Elizabeth will bring a fresh perspective to this commission as she does to every special project, in my experience, and in the role of her present supervisor at the University of Hawaii. Elizabeth has been able to frame issues with her Journalistic lens and expertise with much sophistication yet with the flavor of Hawaii. She lives a healthy life-style and comes with years of "in the trench" experience given her previous roles within Hawaii DOH, as a writer and news contributor and editor. She is able to look "outside of the box" creatively, and is not only a visionary, but will additionally do what it takes to get the job done. She is an asset to our programs given her wisdom, hard working work ethic, and kind team spirit which we all have come to appreciate and try to emulate. I can further attest to her leadership expertise and willingness to serve with others on this particular commission.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maile S. Goo, Psy.D."

Maile S. Goo, Psy.D.
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March 12, 2012

To:
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Hawaii State Capitol, Room 222
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Phone: (808) 586-6833
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From:
Julia Steele
Editor at Large, *Hana Hou!*
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Dear Sen. Green:

I am writing as a friend and associate of Ms. Elizabeth Simon, who is subject to confirmation of her appointment to the Health Planning Council, Honolulu Subarea. I have known and worked with Ms. Simon for over twenty years and in that time I have known her to be a conscientious researcher and thinker who always seeks to do the best possible job and to ensure the best possible outcome. She has a deep understanding of our community and its issues as well as a keen awareness of health concerns in Honolulu.

For these reasons, I think the State would truly benefit from an appointment of Ms. Simon to this position.

Sincerely and with aloha,


Julia Steele