



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

919 Ala Moana Boulevard, Room 101 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96814
Ph. (808) 586-8121 (V/TDD) • Fax (808) 586-8129

March 17, 2014

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Governor's Message 611

Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the
Disability and Communication Access Board
Gubernatorial Nominee Michael Okamoto

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) is pleased to support the reappointment of Mr. Michael Okamoto to our Board.

Mr. Okamoto currently serves as Vice Chairperson of the Board. He is a licensed architect in private practice with a strong knowledge base on the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) and the Federal Fair Housing Accessibility Guidelines (FHAG).

Mr. Okamoto has served on the DCAB's Standing Committee on Facility Access in his first term. He has been a strong proponent of the DCAB process for reviewing state and county plans for conformity to the above accessibility requirements and a strong supporter of the development of a professional staff. Mr. Okamoto has assisted the Board during a phase of implementing a fee schedule to generate revenue to offset expenses and also to amend our statute and administrative rules for the fee schedule. We greatly appreciate the time and effort he has contributed to making the program a success.

We strongly support Mr. Okamoto's nomination to serve on the Disability and Communication Access Board.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

TESTIMONY
of
Michael S. Okamoto

Before the
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH
Monday, March 17, 2014 at 1:45 P.M.

In Consideration of
Governor's Message 611 (GM611)
Relating to the Appointment of Michael Okamoto

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my written testimony to your Committee, and to Governor Abercrombie for my nomination.

I apologize for my absence, but I am currently off island and unable to appear before you in person.

Prior to my initial nomination in 2012, your office sent out a letter which included some questions that I found to be beneficial in supporting my nomination to the Disability and Communication Access Board. As I am unable to attend the hearing in person, I have provided responses to those questions below.

(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, and 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. We draw from our 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 twenty-one years of experience in the architectural profession, and have been a Principal at the architectural firm of Next Design LLC for the past eight 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 design related 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. Through these projects I see first-hand the benefits of good accessible design practices and their effect on patient experience and care delivery.

(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 interpretive opinions published by DCAB are consistent with intent of the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design on a national level.

Interpretive

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

Thank you.