

GM780

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Disability And Communication Access Board, Gubernatorial Nominee, SUMMER KOZAI, for a term to expire 06-30-2017.

Report Title: Disability And Communication Access Board

Description:

Companion:

Package:

Current Referral: CPH

Introducer(s):



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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April 13, 2016

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH

Governor's Message 780
Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Disability and Communication
Access Board
Gubernatorial Nominee Summer Kozai,
For a term to expire June 30, 2017

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) is in support of the nomination of Ms. Summer Kozai to our Board. The Board is a seventeen-member board, of which a majority are people with disabilities, their families, or caregivers. Ms. Kozai will represent a person with a mobility impairment who is a service dog handler on our Board.

In January 2016, Ms. Kozai participated on a panel hosted by DCAB in the Americans with Disabilities Act track at the 2016 State Department of Transportation's Civil Rights Symposium. She was a presenter on the "It's Teamwork: Handler and Service Animal" panel and shared her experience as a service dog handler and some of the challenges she faces in the community with her service dog, Trooper. She is very committed to equal access for individuals with disabilities and the rights of handlers with their service animals.

Ms. Kozai is a 2000 graduate of Iolani School and is currently working as an auditor for the U.S. Defense Contract Audit Agency and leads a fulfilling and active life. A documentary film featuring Ms. Kozai was produced by Iolani students and won the 2015 Hiki No Award for Best Personal Profile in the high school division. The title of the film is "Grace and the High Road" focusing on Ms. Kozai's life of challenges and courage. She is a welcome addition to our Board.

We welcome her participation and input, and recommend your confirmation of her nomination.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANCINE WAI
Executive Director

April 9, 2016

Letter of Recommendation for Summer Kozai

It is an absolute honor and pleasure to submit this letter of recommendation for Summer Kozai. She literally is one of the most remarkable, inspirational, special people I have ever met and I know she will do amazing work for your organization.

I first met Summer after she had been in the hospital for about a year. She already had all four limbs amputated by that time, but still was going through more skin graft surgeries before she could be released. I was working at `Iolani School, Summer's alma mater, and we had been praying for her and sending her positive messages since she got sick. A few colleagues and I decided to visit her in the hospital and I am so glad we did. Since then, Summer and I have kept in touch via email, letters, and face-to-face meetings. She has visited my class on numerous occasions to share her story, I was the main coordinator for her `Iolani homecoming celebration in front of the whole school, and one of my classes even partnered with her to produce a 20-minute documentary about her journey. (Here is the link to the video: <https://vimeo.com/97278907>)

I can't think of a better way to put it...Summer is simply a tremendous, tremendous human being. She is intelligent, warm, funny, and thoughtful. She is open and honest. She is strong-willed, has a huge heart, and has an incredibly positive attitude. She is truly an inspiration.

As I sat down to write this letter, I thought it would be the easiest letter of recommendation I have ever written. It's Summer Kozai and there is SO much to say about her. I guess that's exactly why this letter is so hard! I can't put my finger on the single thing that I love most about her. Perhaps it's the fact that she makes the impossible seem possible. Perhaps it's her ability to tackle a monumental challenge head on with a positive attitude and can-do spirit. Perhaps it's her drive, determination, and desire to focus on the needs of others even when she has every right to focus solely on herself. I think what makes Summer most special, though, is her ability to see beauty around her.

While our students were interviewing Summer for her documentary video, we asked her if she thought she was beautiful. She thought about it and answered, "I have moments when I don't think I'm beautiful like if I have a bad hair day or something, but overall I think I'm beautiful." I'm sure Summer still struggles with aspects of her new life, but she has a tremendous innate perspective to see the good. She once emailed me that the only time she cried throughout her entire illness was when she opened her eyes from her coma, saw her friends and family all around her, and realized that she was surrounded by so much love. She was crying because she felt so lucky. *Lucky.*

I'll finish with Summer's own words because I think she says it best. When she was still in the hospital, I asked her for some words of advice on how to stay positive. In part, this is what she wrote back, "I'll always miss what I physically lost. I'll never again be able to feel my toes in the sand or feel an engagement ring on my finger, but I'm not angry. I'll feel the ocean again and I'll find someone who makes me so happy that a ring won't matter. See, there are always two sides." *That's* what Summer Kozai can bring to your organization.

Sincerely,
Kirk Uejio
Director of Student Activities, `Iolani School (2004-15)
kuejio@gmail.com, (808) 295-5856

- (1) Why do you want to be a member of the Board?

I would like the opportunity to contribute to my community and be a voice for positive change.

- (2) What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Board?

I anticipate that the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Board will include evaluating and commenting on current and future issues which disabled individuals and businesses bring to attention.

- (3) In what ways do you feel that you can help protect the consumer?

I feel that I can help protect the consumer by considering the multi-faceted challenges that individuals of all levels of injury and disability face on a daily basis. I think the best way to help is to try our best to understand the consumer experience then find ways to improve it.

- (4) Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a Board member, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the Board.

I believe that I am qualified because I understand the challenges of being an active member of the community and workforce as a mobility impaired person with a service animal. While I'm not an expert on existing laws, rules, and regulations related to disability and access, I am responsible for a wide spectrum of Federal Department of Defense contracts which require me to quickly adapt to new situations. I'm confident that I will be able to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of a Board member because of my background as an auditor who understands the importance of unbiased review of the facts.

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

I would like to see a tangible improvement in access for mobility challenged persons and increased understanding of the role of service animals in the community.

(6) Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will benefit the Board.

- Fair – I understand that there are two sides to every issue and value both perspectives. Being cognizant of both the consumer and provider is essential for the best outcome.
- Compassionate – I believe there is the opportunity to show compassion in all situations. It has helped me recover DoD funding through audits while maintaining amicable relationships with my contractors.
- Intelligent – Intelligence helps to identify root issues which have the greatest impact. I believe that my ability to quickly identify potential problems or improvements will encourage efficiency.

(7) Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a Board member.

Upper management for my agency advised that I should be visiting contractors at their site. I had to explain to them that many of Hawaii's businesses are small and not in compliance with ADA regulations (mostly because they are grandfathered). It was shocking to them that so many businesses were inaccessible to me. I think that it's difficult for those not directly affected disability to consider that there is a portion of the community that has so much difficulty in day-to-day activities. I was able to explain my challenges so that additional resources were made available to me.

(8) Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Board? How would you overcome conflicts of interest?

I do not foresee any conflicts of interest that could arise during my service on the Board. If encountered, I would overcome any conflicts of interest by first alerting the Board of the potential for conflict and then remove myself from any influence over the issue.