

# GM 515

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Disability And Communication Access Board, Gubernatorial Nominee, NIKKI KEPOO, for a term to expire 06-30-2021.

Report Title: Disability And Communication Access Board

Description:

Companion:

Package:

Current Referral: CPH

Introducer(s):



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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March 10, 2017

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

Governor's Messages 514 and 515  
Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Disability and Communication  
Access Board

Gubernatorial Nominee Nikki Kepoo  
For a term to expire June 30, 2017 and  
For a term to expire June 30, 2021

The Disability and Communication Access Board recommends the appointment of Ms. Nikki Kepoo to the Disability and Communication Access Board. In Governor's Message 514, Ms. Kepoo is currently filling a vacancy expires on June 30, 2017. Ms. Kepoo has been serving as an interim appointment since November 3, 2016. Governor's Message 515 appoints Ms. Kepoo to a four-year term ending June 30, 2021.

The Disability and Communication Access Board is a statewide Governor-appointed Board with a majority of its members being persons with disabilities or family members. The Board's mission is to advocate and promote full inclusion, independence, equal access, and quality of life for persons with disabilities in society.

Ms. Kepoo is a parent of a child who is deaf and she has been an advocate for the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) initiative for language acquisition for young children. Also, per Act 177-2016, Ms. Kepoo was appointed to the Department of Health's Early Language Working Group (ELWG) by the Director of Health. She is serving as the parent of a deaf child who uses American Sign Language. The ELWG will make recommendations to the 2018 Hawaii State Legislature about how to develop age-appropriate language for children 0-5 years of age who are deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind.

Ms. Kepoo will join our Standing Committee on Communication Access. We look forward to her contribution to the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

FRANCINE WAI  
Executive Director

Disability and Communication Access Board  
919 Ala Moana Blvd. #212  
Honolulu, HI 96814

March 2, 2017

Dear Senator Baker:

Nikki Kepo'o asked me to write her a letter of recommendation to serve on DCAB board. I am honored to do this for Nikki. She is a wonderful mother of a Deaf son and has been very involved in his school at Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind and Deaf community of Hawai'i. Recently, she and I were on LEAD-K (Language Equality & Acquisition for the Deaf Kids) committee, along with other committee members, helped pass the bill to help ensure that our Deaf, Hard of hearing, and DeafBlind keiki acquire language before entering Kindergarten.

Her heart is full of compassion, isn't afraid to speak up when things are inappropriate or not pono, and will fight for Deaf people and people with disability. Nikki is definitely a hard worker!

She has been on DCAB board for one term. I strongly recommend that she continue to serve DCAB board, so she can continue to be an asset and contribute to the board.

Sincerely yours,  
Ami Tsuji-Jones  
[seeourhands@gmail.com](mailto:seeourhands@gmail.com)

February 27, 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter serves as a recommendation for Nikki Kepo`o. I have had the pleasure of working with Nikki in various different capacities and I have been impressed with her in every way. I worked closely with Nikki while championing new legislation, LEAD-K, which will support Deaf children and their families prior to entering kindergarten. In addition, Nikki and I both serve as chairs for the School Community Council for the Hawaii School for the Deaf and the Blind. In these roles I have been able to see Nikki and her tenacious spirit rise to any challenge and address complex issues with compassion and commitment.

During our work on the LEAD-K core team, Nikki was a driving force. She brought her own personal experiences to the table to help bring a different perspective to the legislature. She is both relatable and compassionate and her desire to make positive change is evident from the moment you meet her. As the Chairperson for the HSDB School Community Council I have had the opportunity to see Nikki work as a team player and insert herself into the Deaf community with ease and comfort. She ability to maintain positive working relationships with teachers, staff members, and members of the community is unparalleled.

Nikki has additional credibility as an advocate. As a parent with Native Hawaiian roots, she strongly advocated for the development and of Hawaiian language schools. As a parent of a Deaf child, Nikki has advocated for the language needs of her child. She has shown a great deal of strength and commitment to not only her children, but the needs of children here in Hawaii and beyond. She is a terrific advocate for children, and possesses many traits that make her uniquely qualified. Nikki is a self-motivated individual with a hard working attitude. There is no task too big or small; if it is important, she will take it on. Nikki has a genuine personality and treats every person with respect. She listens to people and validates their concerns. Nikki is both honest and trustworthy.

I would highly recommend Nikki to continue her work with DCAB. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at any time.

Best,

Marisa Bolivar



March 4, 2017

To whom it may concern:

Nikki Kepo'o has worked for me a few times over the last 15 years and each time she has performed her job responsibilities exceptionally well. I have grown to respect and rely on her work ethic and integrity.

I always had Nikki involved in all our office management discussions and decisions because I knew I could count on her to do the right thing. She has always been a truthful confidant and gained tremendous respect from the employees she managed as well as her co-workers.

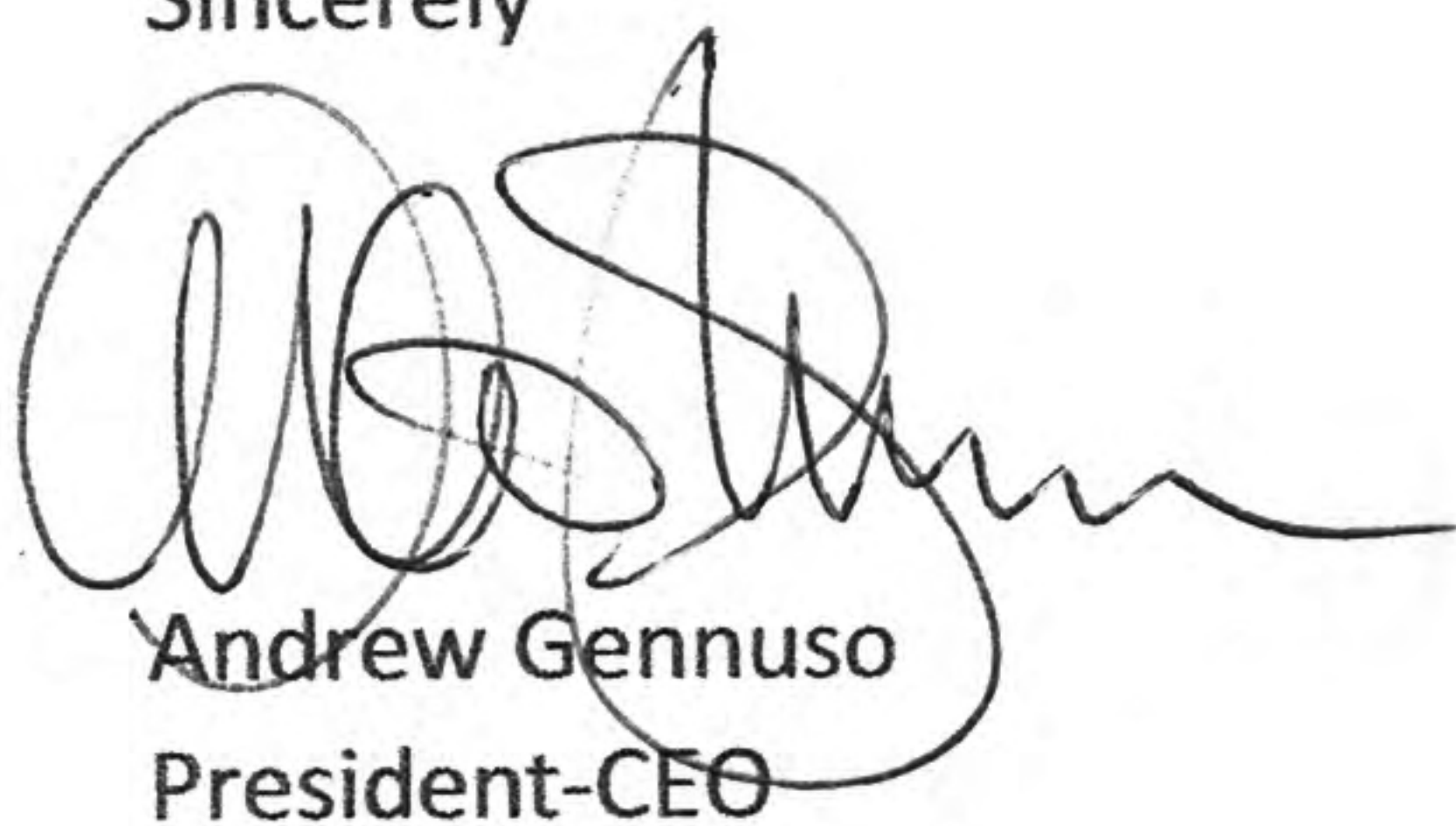
Operating in a tourist environment such as Hawaii it is sometimes difficult to find people with the proper work ethic to be successful. Nikki was always the first to be there and the last to leave. If asked to do something outside of the normal work day she was the first to stand up and take on the task.

Nikki was responsible for running and overseeing our entire sales, marketing and back office in Hawaii. That position was mission critical for us since our corporate office is 3000 miles away.

If our company ever made the decision to come back to the Islands, Nikki would be the first person I called, so it is easy for me to recommend her for any position or opportunity she is interested in doing.

If there is anything else you need or would like to please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely



Andrew Gennuso  
President-CEO

**GM 514**

**Nikki Kepo'o**

**1. Why do you want to be a member of the Board?**

I have a deaf son who is the first in our family. I want to ensure that he will have all the appropriate and adequate access he deserves and needs.

**2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Board?**

To provide feedback and assess all departments recommendations for all disability communication and access within the State of Hawaii

**3. In what ways do you feel that you can help protect the consumer?**

I am currently responsible for my son's access which inadvertently makes me a consumer. I want to ensure that vendors, providers, ect understand the needs and provides the necessary means in order for my son to access all that I am able to

**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 have over 20 years of experience in administrative management duties which also include HR, business management, and community service. I served as a committee member to the Lead K efforts in Hawaii as well as currently serve on the School community counsel at HSDB, New born hearing screening board, and other Hawaiian language clubs. Although I am hearing, I took the initiative to learn all I could through experts, videos, books, anything I could get my hands on that deal with deaf, hard of hearing, and several modes of communication and challenges. I believe my passion as a parent will serve the board well when considering the needs of a family in unfamiliar territory who rely on the expertise of others to make the best decision for their family(ies).

**5. What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?**

I hope to bring practical and useful information to the board and the departments by providing insight to our life experiences when dealing with challenges of access for my son and our family. I also hope to offer support to these departments when necessary changes or adaptability is required to fulfill the needs of the consumer as well as the financial implications to the state.

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

Humble, hardworking, and diligent

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

I am a State of Hawaii Notary, I also have managed 21 budgets simultaneously which can assist in the times when it needs to make sense in the big picture for what we need to accomplish, and lastly, I am a parent of a deaf child... that's probably the largest and most rewarding experience I have. I also have an older daughter who is trilingual. She is currently at Kamakau (all Hawaiian immersion school), effectively communicates with her brother and deaf community, and she is also able to realize the need for access and equality.

**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'm unsure of any current possible conflicts of interest, but whatever could or may arise, I will evaluate what the conflict is and determine the level of priority it raises between this board position and that conflict.