

# GM 653

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances, Gubernatorial Nominee, ERIKA VARGAS, for a term to expire 06-30-2017.

Report Title: Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances

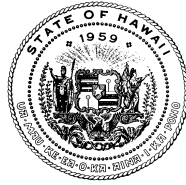
Description:

Companion:

Package:

Current Referral: CPH

Introducer(s):



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM653**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on**  
**Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances, Gubernatorial Nominee, ERIKA VARGAS, for**  
**a term to expire 06-30-2017**

SENATOR ROSALYN H. BAKER, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION, AND HEALTH  
Hearing Date: March 31, 2017 Room Number: 229

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None.

2 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health supports the nomination and confirmation  
3 of Erika Vargas to the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances  
4 (HACDACS) for a term to expire 6/30/2017.

5 HACDACS appointees represent a cross-section of the community, including, but not limited to  
6 pharmacological, medical, community and business affairs, youth action, educational, legal  
7 defense, enforcement and corrections segments of the community, pursuant to HRS §329-2.

8 Ms. Vargas has a Masters in Social Work (M.S.W.) from Boston University and is the Manager  
9 of Adult Services at Hina Mauka, overseeing operations of residential and outpatient services for  
10 patients with alcohol and substance use disorders, and where she also previously served as a  
11 clinical team leader and an intake coordinator. Besides her passion for promoting the social  
12 work profession, she has a strong interest in community involvement, is active with the Aiea  
13 Community Association, served in a Latino re-entry program where she provided cultural  
14 services to reduce recidivism of offenders in recovery, and once collected and analyzed data on  
15 homeless injection drug users in Puerto Rico. The appointment of Erika Vargas will ensure  
16 representation of the community and business affairs segment in Commission deliberations.

17 We respectfully request your expeditious and favorable consideration for the nomination of Erika  
18 Vargas to serve on HACDACS.

- 1 Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of a volunteer whose appointment adds
- 2 to the cross-section of community interests represented on the Commission.
- 3 **Offered Amendments:** None.



HAWAII SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION

### **GM653 HACDAC Nominee: Erika Vargas**

Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health

- Senator Rosalyn Baker, Chair; Senator Clarence Nishihara, Vice Chair
- Friday, March 31, 2017 at 9:00 a.m.
- Conference Room 229

### **HSAC Supports GM653:**

*Good Morning Chair Baker; Vice Chair Nishihara; And Distinguished Committee Members. My name is Alan Johnson, Chair of the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition, an organization of more than 30 treatment and prevention agencies across the State.*

### **HSAC supports Erika Vargas for the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDAC):**

- Ms. Vargas is an expert in treatment for substance use disorders as well as licensed to diagnose mental illness.
- Since she involved in a managerial position at Hina Mauka, Erika Vargas will contribute to HACDAC about what are current policies and practices in drug abuse treatment, what is the vision for better and more cost effective treatment as well as what are the gaps in services and programs.
- Ms. Erika Vargas will represent a broader contingent than just Hina Mauka in that she is also representing the Hawaii Substance Abuse Coalition (HSAC), an organization of over 30 treatment and prevention agencies across the state.
- Ms. Vargas will meet with HSAC to receive input as well as provide feedback from HACDAC. Such a representation of a broader collaborative as well as a developing a feedback loop will greatly improve HACDAC's effectiveness for developing innovative and collaborative systemic changes to improve services and programs.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify and are available for questions.

February 5, 2017

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Governor Ige,

I would like to extend a strong recommendation for Erika Vargas for the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse (HACDACSA). I have had the opportunity to meet and work with Erika professionally in a partnership to include women and their families who are dealing with both substance abuse and domestic violence issues. Erika's responsibilities at Hina Mauka are vast and yet she has been diligent, knowledgeable, innovative, open in communication, and extremely effective in her work.

In my professional career I have worked with many partners in all areas of community service and non-profits. Erika has been one of the most highly dedicated and extremely focused people I have had the honor in working with. She has created a space where those taking on healing can be successful due to her commitment to providing opportunities for them that are met with both research and cultural knowledge. Her ability to understand that substance use/abuse are in many ways directly correlated to bigger issues like family struggles, mental illness, and culture are apparent and shows in the healing process of every single woman we've had the chance to work with together.

Our state, our people, would be greatly influenced and led on a positive and successful road should they have the chance to follow Erika's leadership in relation to being a member of HACDACSA. Choosing Erika for this extensive responsibility would be a very meaningful decision you would make on behalf of the people who would deeply benefit from Erika's work.

I'd be happy to discuss Erika's skills and professionalism at any further time.

Mahalo,  
Chelsie Evans  
Ho'oikaika Program Manager



Ka Hale Pomaika'i, Inc.

PO Box 1895

Kaunakakai, Hawai'i 96748

(808)558-8480/v (808)558-8489/f



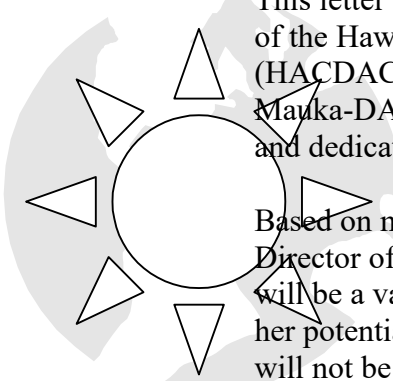
February 10, 2017

State of Hawai'i Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Hawai'i State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Warmest Aloha,

This letter is written to recommend that Ms. Erika Vargas be selected as a member of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS). She has been a positive influence both at her work place (Hina Mauka-DASH) and within the treatment community of providers. She is energetic and dedicated to the field in which I have worked for 30 years.

Based on my experience and long standing professional history as an Executive Director of Moloka'i's premier treatment and recovery center it is my belief that she will be a valued asset to this commission. Please give your utmost consideration to her potential and qualifications which she has outlined in her resume. I am sure you will not be disappointed by including Ms. Vargas on the HACDACS commission.



Respectfully yours,

*Shari R. Lynn*

Shari R. Lynn, M Ed, CCS, CSAC, CPS, CTS, CCJP, CSAPA, SAP, NCAC=II, ICADC

Executive Director Ka Hale Pomaika'i

*The Blessed House on Moloka'i-Native Hawaiian Treatment and Recovery Center*

Executive Board Member Hawai'i Substance Abuse Coalition



February 7, 2017

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Aloha Governor Ige,

I strongly recommend Erika Vargas to serve on the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDAC). I have known Ms. Vargas since 2014 when she began her employment at Hina Mauka. Ms. Vargas started as Intake Coordinator and worked her way up to Manager within 8 months. Her main role is to oversee operations and program development of services at our Kaneohe residential and Waipahu outpatient treatment centers and our therapeutic community at the Women's Community Correctional Center. Ms. Vargas is knowledgeable, diligent, and thorough. She has established wonderful rapport with clients and has outstanding skills in working with staff and agency collaborators.

Ms. Vargas is a remarkable employee who has demonstrated her commitment, critical thinking, resourcefulness, and ability to meet the challenges associated with community-based substance abuse services. She is currently working to develop stronger inter-agency collaboration by reaching out to various other providers and reinforcing the concept of a "warm handoff" with her staff. Ms. Vargas is extremely resourceful, detail-oriented, and creative. She has an effective way of connecting with clients, co-workers, and the community. Ms. Vargas fully embraces local values. She holds a deep passion for community and listens intently to understand the challenges to Hawaii, especially with respect to cultural implications.

It is stated without a doubt or reservation that Ms. Vargas is fully capable of serving on HACDAC. She can contribute thought provoking ideas from a clinical and community practice perspective, listen to other's ideas and help bring people together in a collaborative way. She will be an asset to HACDAC and she herself would benefit greatly from this opportunity for community development. Due to Ms. Vargas' vision, competency, and keen understanding of social issues, I believe that she is an excellent candidate for HACDAC.

Aloha,

Alan Johnson



Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

February 10, 2017

Aloha e Governor Ige,

It is my pleasure to submit this letter of recommendation and support for the application of Erika Vargas, LCSW, to serve on the Hawaii Advisory Commission for Drug and Controlled Substances (HACDCS).

KUA is a local, Hawai'i non-profit committed to the building and growing community stewardship of natural resources in Hawai'i. KUA supports and facilitates 3 networks of 'āina-based practitioners and organizations, representing over 70 sites across 6 islands.

Erika is a regular volunteer, and in particular provided several days of translation assistance at KUA's parallel event for the IUCN World Conservation Congress, serving indigenous community leaders from several Spanish-speaking nations, primarily in South America. Erika's service was vital to helping our Hawai'i rural community leaders connect with their Spanish-speaking counterparts – finding common ground and friendship that carried into the World Conservation Congress. It takes a skilled listener, and talented facilitator to jump into translation in this kind of cross-cultural context and do it so well.

I have known Erika since 2013, and have come to appreciate deeply her pragmatic approach, her conscientiousness, her diligence, and her thoughtfulness. She has a relentless work ethic, and her passion for people, and for community – shines through.

Erika is a listener, a practical actor, and a relentless worker. She is also incredibly kind and attuned – she has made the commitment and invested time and energy in deeply understanding and embracing the unique cultural context in which she lives and works in Hawai'i. In addition to volunteer work with KUA, Erika volunteers regularly with a lo'i near her home, is involved with the 'Aiea Community Association, and served as a resource caregiver (foster parent) to two young local boys.

HACDCS is to “contribute to the solution of problems arising from the abuse of controlled substances.” HACDCS – like other advisory commissions – is to assist the state in tackling some of our most wicked problems. A wicked problem is a social or cultural problem that is difficult or impossible to solve for as many as four reasons: incomplete or contradictory knowledge, the number of people and opinions involved, the large economic burden, and the interconnected nature of these problems with other problems. Indeed, we are work at KUA, understanding connections between health, substance abuse, domestic violence, and poverty, and natural resource loss. For example, anecdotally methamphetamine





use/abuse may drive some overharvesting of limu and fish for the provision of quick cash. Solving wicked problems in Hawaii demands people of high skill, capability and commitment who are willing to serve.

For all these reasons, I highly recommend Erika Vargas for appointment to the HACDACS. Mahalo nui for the opportunity to share.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Miwa Tamanaha", written over a light gray rectangular background.

Miwa Tamanaha  
Deputy Director  
Kua'āina Ulu 'Auamo

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ige  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Governor Ige,

I have known Ms. Erika Vargas as a colleague and have worked with her in the field of substance abuse treatment for several years. She has been with Hina Mauka for the past 3 years and has served as their Manager of Adult Services.

Ms. Vargas is an MSW and has actively participated in the chemical dependency treatment community by attending and participating in trainings, developing and mentoring students and staff, and contributing to the research and treatment of substance abuse. She has actively worked with the Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Addiction Department through Hina Mauka's accreditation process and program monitoring as well as the development of its internet Web Infrastructure for Treatment Services (WITS) program.

The clientele we work with are homeless, mentally ill, referred through the criminal justice system, college educated, self-referred, and family referred. Erika is knowledgeable in working with these populations.

I fully support Ms. Vargas and believe she would be an asset as a member of the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

Sincerely,



Adele Chung, MSCP, CCS, CSAC

Clinical Director—The Salvation Army Addiction Treatment Services

**NEW HOPE COUNSELING, LLC  
OUTPATIENT SERVICES**

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ig  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

February 12, 2017

**Letter of Recommendation**

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter is a recommendation in regards to Erika Vargas, the current Manager of Adult Services at Hina Mauka Substance Abuse Treatment Facility. My name is Isaiah Moreno and I have had the pleasure of knowing Ms. Vargas for the last two years. As a former staff of Hina Mauka, I have had the opportunity to come back to the facility and provide individual psychotherapy as an additional service to their clients. Ms. Vargas, as the current manager, positively facilitated these services by promoting to her staff and their clients to take full advantage of community resources and mental health services available through their agency.

During the time I have known Erika, she has always been very professional and organized in her work at Hina Mauka. She is a great collaborator, and works diligently to connect outside resources and training to her staff, and their clients. She is a hard worker, and I have noticed that the agency has operated more effectively in their communication, clarity of staff roles, collaborative efforts within the agency and among the community, and first and foremost, in providing the utmost care and dignity to the clients they service at Hina Mauka. I have been utterly impressed with the direction that this treatment program has taken in being a leader among the substance abuse services available in Hawaii.

I understand that Erika is applying to serve on the Hawaii Advisory Commission for Drug and Controlled Substances (HACDACS), and I fully endorse her application. Based on my experience in working with Erika, I believe she will be an invaluable member and offer an array of experience and expertise in working with the substance abuse field.

If there are any questions regarding this recommendation or any other further inquiry, please feel free to contact me at 808-233-9775.

Sincerely,



*Isaiah Moreno, LMFT, CSAC  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist  
Certified Substance Abuse Counselor*



**WAIANAЕ COAST  
COMPREHENSIVE  
HEALTH CENTER**  
www.wcchc.com

February 12, 2017

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ig  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

### **Letter of Recommendation**

To Whom it May Concern,

This is a letter of recommendation for Ms. Erika Vargas, LCSW to serve on the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS). As the manager of Adult Services at Hina Mauka, Erika has extensive knowledge of substance abuse and mental health treatment using a trauma-informed, particularly for individuals suffering from complex co-morbidities. Her extensive knowledge and commitment to excellence has allowed her to excel in her field, not only as a practitioner, but as a teacher and a mentor for others under her direction.

In the four years I have known Ms. Vargas, she has displayed exceptional leadership skills in the area of mentorship and teaching. She has an exceptional capacity in the area of time management, often arriving at work in the early morning hours in preparation for her day. She approaches each task, regardless of importance, with attention and precision. As a fellow practicum instructor, serving with Ms. Vargas at the UH Manoa School of Social work, I have seen first-hand the positive impact of her skills on her student's growth and learning.

In her role at Hina Mauka, Ms. Vargas is often entrusted with a great deal of responsibility in regards to supervision, work flow, and patient care. She handles this level of responsibility with grace and elegance, while consistently maintaining a positive, considerate and genuine attitude to foster team cohesion and mutual respect. In my interactions with Ms. Vargas, she has been known to work well on a team, never hesitating to bring insightful ideals and always considering self-awareness in all measures.

Ms. Vargas' extensive knowledge community resources enhance her ability to collaborate with other agencies, such as Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center. Her adaptability and professionalism makes her an excellent candidate to work with and advocate for diverse and indigenous populations, similar to those we serve in Waianae. Her dedication to her patients and to culturally competent approaches makes her an asset in WCCHCs effort to collaborate with surrounding agencies to promote continuity of care.

86-260 Farrington Hwy Waianae HI 96792  
(808) 697-3586

Over the last four years, I have maintained regular professional and personal contact with Ms. Vargas as a fellow social worker, trusted colleague, and a dear friend. In that time, I have come to know her as a woman of integrity with a deep rooted passion for serving and helping others through their journey of healing. Her years of experience in schooling and diverse work endeavors has well equipped her to be an asset to the HACDACS to promote best practice, continuity of care, and genuine concern for those suffering from substance abuse problems, as well as those impacted by these issues.

It is with great pride that I write this recommendation. Ms. Vargas' hard work and experience has made her an excellent candidate to service on the HACDACS and I am confident she will become an instrumental supporter of your vision. It has truly been a privilege to work alongside her in the field of social work. Should have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (808) 391-2524.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Kau'ionalani Nishizaki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

L. Kau'ionalani Nishizaki, LSW  
Senior Service Coordinator  
Phone: (808) 697-3710  
Cell: (808) 391-2524  
Fax: (808) 697-3679  
Email: LNishizaki@wcchc.com

February 9, 2017

Office of the Governor  
The Honorable David Y. Ig  
Governor of Hawaii  
Executive Chambers  
State Capitol  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Honorable David Y. Ig,

I am writing to recommend Erika Vargas to serve on the Hawaii Advisory Commission for Drug and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

I know Erika professionally in the capacity of working with her at Hina Mauka. In interacting with Erika, I have experienced her depth of knowledge in substance abuse treatments and application to client and community needs. Her collaborative, hands-on and ethical approach is evident in how she works with both staff and clients. Her ability to manage the complex program at Hina Mauka requires detailed coordination and flexibility, while keeping in mind the goals of stakeholders. Erika's dedication to the treatment, prevention and education of client and community is obvious with whom she engages. I am confident that Erika Vargas would be of high value to HACDACS and recommend without reservation that she be accepted to serve as a member of HACDACS.

Kind Regards,

Nadine I. Chiang  
LMHC 403, NCC, CSAC & MBA

**TESTIMONY ON GM563: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances, Gubernatorial Nominee, ERIKA VARGAS, for a term to expire 06-30-2017.**

**TO:** COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, CONSUMER PROTECTION AND HEALTH  
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair; Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair, and Members, Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection Health.

**FROM:** Erika Vargas

**Hearing: Friday, 3/31/17; 9:00 am; Conf. Room 229**

Chair Baker, Vice Chair Nishihara, and Members, Committee on CPH:

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve our state as part of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances. I have answered all the questions that were sent to me by Legislative Assistant Estrella Vega; however, if you would like any more information, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Again, thank you for this great opportunity.

**From:** mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 29, 2017 6:01 PM  
**To:** CPH Testimony  
**Cc:** hlusk@chowproject.org  
**Subject:** \*Submitted testimony for GM653 on Mar 31, 2017 09:00AM\*

**GM653**

Submitted on: 3/29/2017

Testimony for CPH on Mar 31, 2017 09:00AM in Conference Room 229

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Heather Lusk	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please note that testimony submitted less than 24 hours prior to the hearing, improperly identified, or directed to the incorrect office, may not be posted online or distributed to the committee prior to the convening of the public hearing.

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**GM653**

**Erika Vargas: Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances**

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

I am currently employed at Hina Mauka as the Manager of Adult Services and I have a strong interest in community involvement. I would like to help find solutions for the substance abuse issues that plague our communities by offering my knowledge of substance abuse treatment.

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

I perceive the role of the commission members is to serve advisors and guide the Director of Health in substance abuse matters by using our collective knowledge and skill sets. We would also assist the Department of Health in coordinating action programs and increasing public awareness of substance abuse issues. Our responsibility would be to stay informed about the issues particular to the various communities and to represent all communities rather than our personal interests and opinions.

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

I can help protect the consumer by working collaboratively with the other commission members as we seek solutions. I can also ensure that information is reaching the public, that the information is accurate and easy to understand, and that any action initiated will target the greatest number of people as possible.

**(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 am a Social Worker by profession and maintain a person-in-environment and ecological systems perspectives. I understand (and am still learning) the intricate social dynamics of HI. I have also worked in the field of substance abuse for 5 years in various roles, i.e. research assistant, child & family therapist, substance abuse counselor, and manager of a treatment facility. I have knowledge of evidence-based practices. Most of all, I am a team player, very collaborative in my work, and am working on developing long-lasting relationships with other providers.

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

As I am new to the Commission, I hope to learn more about governmental processes and to accomplish any goals the Commission sets for each year.

Idealistically, I hope to make an impact that reduces the number of substance users, increases access to services, and increases the number of people in treatment. We need to strengthen a community response that funnels people into services rather than incarceration.

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

Three qualities that describe me are persistent, problem solver, and flexible. I have a strong work ethic and will give my all to the task at hand. I do not like letting others down. I also like to look at problems from every angle and explore multiple solutions before settling on one thing. If traditional solutions are not a good fit, I think outside the box. Although I may have my ideas or opinions, I am open-minded and flexible. I am a good listener and know how to compromise. Most of all, I'm a genuine person and truly care about protecting and serving vulnerable populations.

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

I previously served on the Steering Committee for Boston University School of Social Work (BUSSW) Alumni Board. We met monthly to review and discuss the direction of BUSSW, ways to increase alumni involvement with the current student body, and how to improve or enhance the student experience. We held BUSSW accountable to the mission of the school and met with the BUSSW President yearly to provide feedback and follow up from the previous year's meeting. We also conducted educational programs based on current events that connected students and alumni to the community.

**(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 possible conflicts of interest that could arise during my service on the Commission. However, if one were to surface, I would consult with the Commission Chairperson and my Social Work Code of Ethics. I would follow any policies and procedures in place to resolve the conflict of interest.