

# GM735

Measure Title: Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Rehabilitation Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, DEBORAH KOBAYAKAWA, for a term to expire 06-30-2019.

Report Title: State Rehabilitation Council

Description:

Companion:

Package:

Current Referral: HMS

Introducer(s):

## HEARING HMS--GM 735

My name is Deborah Kobayakawa and I am submitting my testimony for consideration and confirmation to the State Rehabilitation Council representing the Parent Training Information Center for Hawaii. I feel I am qualified because of my broad range of both professional and personal experiences working with children and adults with disabilities.

I deeply desire to become a member of the council because I see the disability population as having so much to offer employers. They're a valuable yet underutilized work force that most employers never consider and many do not even know their potential exists.

If appointed to the State Rehabilitation Council I will collaborate with other agencies that support the disability community such as the Department of Health, Developmental Disabilities Division, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education to identify some of the obstacles and challenges that are preventing employment outcomes from improving in our state.

I have extensive experience working with the professionals in the field of disabilities to include state run and non-profit agencies. I possess effective communication skills and am very passionate about removing the barriers that are impacting employment outcomes in the disability community statewide here in Hawaii.

In addition, I am the proud mother of a young man with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, (ID/DD), who was job ready upon exiting public high school. He received DVR services and job training while he was in high school. He was hired in 2010 and is still an employed, productive, taxpaying member of our community.

I believe this is a huge accomplishment, as this is not typical for the ID/DD population. He is in fact the exception and not the rule. The numbers for employment in this population are so low that it breaks my heart.

Because of this very personal experience, I understand that it takes a carefully laid out plan often with multiple agency involvement. I truly understand the parent perspective of how overwhelming navigating the various systems of care can be for families.

Given the opportunity, I will bring to the council my professional experience, my own personal journey and that of the many parents of whom I've worked with. I want to assist the State Rehabilitation Council in developing and reviewing state goals and priorities to the VR Program. I'm committed to being part of improving the VR agency's performance and overall employment outcomes to the disability community statewide.

I strongly believe that everyone deserves the right to be a productive, contributory, taxpaying member of their community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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April 3, 2017

Senator Josh Green, Chair  
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair  
Committee on Human Services

**RE: GM 735, Testimony in SUPPORT of DEBORAH KOBAYAKAWA's  
Confirmation to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Council**

Hearing Date: Wednesday April 5, 2017 at 2:45PM  
Hearing Place: Conference Room 016

Dear Senators Green, Chang, and Members of the Committee:

I testify in strong support of GM 735 and Deborah Kobayakawa's confirmation to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Council.

I have known nominee Deborah Kobayakawa since 2006. We first met at an IEP at Heeia Elementary School. Ms. Kobayakawa was a SPED teacher for a student whom I served as *guardian ad litem* in the child welfare system. I was immediately impressed with Ms. Kobayakawa's extensive knowledge, passion, and devotion to working with children with special needs. Her level of competence and caring were outstanding. She advocated tirelessly for the best interests of all the children she serves but also has a practical knowledge of law, policy, service delivery, and best practices that I continue to admire to this day.

I continued my relationship with Ms. Kobayakawa over the years, as we both stayed involved in the life of that same foster child who brought us together. Although the foster youth is now twenty-one (21) years old having aged out of the foster care system at eighteen (18) following over thirty (30) different foster family and group home placements across the state of Hawaii, Ms. Kobayakawa has not only maintained contact with this former foster youth, but has actively loved, supported, and encouraged her to continue school, find work and a place to live, make healthy choices, and stay active in Imua Kakou (the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Services program to support former foster youth until age 21).

Over the past eleven (11) years, I have been consistently impressed with Ms. Kobayakawa's professionalism, diligence, knowledge and caring. Having raised a special needs child herself, Ms. Kobayakawa is a strong advocate for supported independence and understands the needs of both parents and service providers in our community. Having worked at both the Department of Education and the Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii, Ms. Kobayakawa understands the many facets of serving those with special needs and their families. She has been a consumer of vocational rehabilitation services on behalf of her son and understands the needs of families and our community.

I whole-heartedly give Ms. Kobayakawa my highest recommendation as I believe she will be of great service to Hawaii in this capacity.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Ms. Kobayakawa. I am hopeful that you will agree that Ms. Kobayakawa is uniquely qualified to serve in this capacity.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Katherine Bennett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Katherine Bennett, JD, MSW