

Testimony of the Contractors License Board

**Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, and Health
Wednesday, May 13, 2020
9:30 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 229**

**On the following measure:
G.M. 688, SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION
TO THE CONTRACTORS LICENSE BOARD,
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, ERIC HIGASHIHARA,
FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2023**

WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY

Chair Baker and Members of the Committee:

My name is Candace Ito, and I am the Executive Officer of the Contractors License Board (Board). The Board supports the confirmation of Mr. Eric Higashihara's appointment to the Board as a public member.

Mr. Higashihara has been an interim member since July 1, 2019. He brings to the Board more than 20 years of experience as a private wealth advisor and owner of an Ameriprise Financial franchise. Having previously served on the Pest Control Board as a public member, he understands the role and responsibility of a public member.

Mr. Higashihara has a strong work ethic and is a reliable member who is well-prepared for meetings and is not afraid to ask questions to understand the matters before the Board. His financial knowledge contributes to the Board's discussions regarding the financial integrity of applicants and is therefore an asset to the Board. Mr. Higashihara actively participates in discussions and has demonstrated a command over the issues before the Board.

Mr. Higashihara's financial expertise, commitment, interest in serving on the Board, and desire to contribute to the community will continue to enhance the effectiveness of the Board and represent the interest of the consuming public.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



Debra Bennett, MSFS[®], CFP[®], ChFC[®], CLU[®]
Field Vice President

Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.
Ala Moana Pacific Center, Ste. 1304
1585 Kapiolani Boulevard
Honolulu, HI 96814
Tel: 808.942.7797. Ext. 1134
Fax: 808.942.8043
Direct: 808.952.1134
debra.s.bennett@ampf.com

To: Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health (CPH)

Regarding: The nomination of Eric Higashihara

May 10, 2020

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to you to provide my wholehearted endorsement of Governor David Ige's nomination of Eric Higashihara to the Contractors Licensing Board for your consideration. In my opinion, Eric is an ideal candidate for selection, with the leadership skills, intellect, energy and work ethic to make a lasting impact as a member. I have enjoyed a close professional relationship with him for 20 years. Eric has served as a mentor, consul, and role-model for financial services entrepreneurship, compliance, and community impact. His actions and conversations are inspirations to his colleagues and the employees in his care. I am absolutely certain that Eric's imaginative, industrious approach to leadership and problem solving will serve the board well, and his tremendous potential can be further realized.

Eric inspires cooperation and is a champion of progress. His creativity extends into new ways to help his firm guide the next generation of savers and investors in achieving their financial goals. He is committed to continuously improving the customer experience.

In summary, I can think of no-finer example of leadership, compassion, character, and integrity than Eric Higashihara. In his important roles within the financial industry, in his concurrent contributions a vast array of outreach, advocacy, and cultural organizations within the state, and in his capacity as a role-model husband, father, and friend, Eric is without peer. Simply stated, Eric is a rare individual of consequence and I am extraordinarily pleased to endorse him for this prestigious undertaking.

Sincerely,

Debra S. Bennett

Field Vice President

Ameriprise Financial Services

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Keith K. Ogasawara, M.D.
Jan A. Kobayashi
3288 Moanalua Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
May 8, 2020

Via Email to CPHTestimony@capitol.hawaii.gov
Senator Rosalyn H. Baker, Chair
Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and Health
Hawaii State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Support for Confirmation to the Contractor License Board of
Gubernatorial Nominee, Eric Higashihara

Dear Senators Baker and Chang and members of the Committee on Commerce,
Consumer Protection and Health:

We are personal friends and business clients of Eric Higashihara, and we strongly support his confirmation to the Contractor License Board. We have known Mr. Higashihara for over fifteen years. We initially met when our children took swimming lessons together at the YMCA. Later when our children were older, Jan was lucky enough to be able to observe his leadership and organizational skills when he was chair of one of the most important committees--the committee that handled the finances, for a community fundraising event that grossed over \$1.3 million.

Mr. Higashihara is also a tireless advocate for children with learning disabilities; he serves as a Trustee on the Board of Assets School, and he personally helped us when our son was having difficulty in school. He supported us and helped to get our son diagnosed properly.

Mr. Higashihara is honest, straightforward and thorough in his endeavors and in his dealings with people. We have trusted him with our personal finances for the past five years. We believe that he will serve the State of Hawaii on the Contractor License Board with integrity and distinction.

We strongly urge you to confirm Mr. Higashihara to the Contractor License Board. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Keith K. Ogasawara, M.D.
Jan A. Kobayashi

Senator Rosalyn H. Baker
Chair
Committee on Commerce Consumer Protection and Health
Hawai'i State Senate

May 11, 2020

Re: Letter of Support for Nomination of Eric M. Higashihara,
Contractors License Board

Dear Senator Baker:

I am privileged to provide the Committee with this letter in support of the nomination of my good friend Eric Higashihara for continued service on the Contractor License Board within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

One on-line dictionary defines "citizenship" as "[T]he character of an individual viewed as a member of society; behavior in terms of the duties, obligations, and functions of a citizen[.]"

For Eric, I think the word more specifically means gathering your talent and energies to accomplish worthy objectives for the greater good. You do this knowing that you have other obligations to family and clients. You do this not to build business, contacts, or otherwise advance your career; your career is already established. You do this even when you're pretty tired. You do this, in sum, because you love Hawaii and you sincerely want to give back to a place that has been good to you.

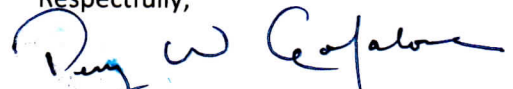
I don't think Eric, in truth, would spend much time intellectualizing about it. He would say that he commits to continued public service because Hawai'i is his home and it is the right thing to do.

Eric is a family man, married, with two fine sons. He values loyalty, honesty, and kindness. He has a good sense of humor, especially on the links when golf swings go awry.

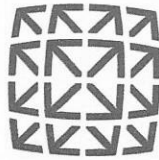
Eric is a respected and successful financial advisor to whom many clients entrust the fruits of their life's work. I know he will come to Board meetings prepared. He will listen. He will ask thoughtful questions. He will not speak just to hear himself talk. He will respect the time of others. He will be fully engaged in the task of disciplined decision-making --fair, to the point, and with consumer protection as the paramount consideration.

I urge the Senate's favorable consideration of this fine citizen.

Respectfully,



Perry W. Confalone, Esq. (Ret.)
1210 Kaiama Place
Honolulu, Hawaii 96825
(808) 295-5136



HAWAII EMPLOYERS COUNCIL

2682 Waiwai Loop • Honolulu, HI 96819-1938 • www.hecouncil.org

Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection & Health
Hawaii Legislature
415 S. Beretania St.
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

May 12, 2020

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Clayton Kamida, President of the Hawaii Employers Council. I am writing to support Eric Higashara's nomination to the Contractors Licensing Board. I am writing in my personal capacity, and not as a representative of the Hawaii Employers Council.

I have known Eric for over 40 years. He is a person of great integrity and great abilities. Although his work as a financial advisor keeps him extremely busy, he has always found time to participate in community activities, and provide support to charitable organizations. He is currently on the Board of Trustees for the Assets School, and has contributed freely of both his time and money to support that worthy organization.

Eric's business acumen and understanding of financial matters will be a great resource for the Contractors Licensing Board. He also has a lot of common sense, and is not afraid to speak his mind – which I think are very valuable traits for public service. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Aloha,

Clayton Kamida

We Know HR

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

With two (2) adult sons and a supportive wife, as well as in a succession planning phase of my business, I now have the time to commit to Nonprofit and Government Boards that will benefit from my life's experiences and professional expertise. I have been fortunate to have been mentored by many outstanding community leaders and would like to invest my time by volunteering to help the community that has been my lifelong home. I would also like to set an example for my sons so they will devote time to organizations of their passion.

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

As an Interim Public Member of this Board since July 1, 2019, I have a good understanding of my roles and responsibilities of helping the construction industry thrive in the State of Hawaii without adversely impacting the best interest of our residents.

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

Taking my fiduciary duties seriously, I will vet RME applicants, verify that a company applying to do businesses in this State is adequately capitalized to fulfill their contract obligations, and adequately deal with nonperforming contractors after investigation and recommendation from RICO for the benefit of consumers.

(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.

As an Interim Public Member, I have used my experiences on other Boards to confirm that our decisions follow HRS, its rules, and past practices. I have used my professional knowledge to carefully read the submitted financial statements of private and public companies to confirm they are financially capable to be granted a license to operate in this State.

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

Especially due to COVID-19 and the State's loss of a robust Agriculture Industry from the 1970's, I feel it is my obligation to support this revenue segment of our economy without jeopardizing the general public and comply within all laws. In other words, as a Public Member of this Board, I feel it is my special responsibility to protect the citizens of this State without adversely harming the Construction Industry.

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

“Commitment” to the beneficiaries of the State of Hawaii: Its citizens;
“Integrity” to make the best decisions, without self-interest and
“Respectfulness” of other Board Members and their decisions.

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

As a Board Member and Trustee of other organizations, I have received training that is required to be a fiduciary to help the Board make decisions that will not adversely bring liability to the State of Hawaii and will not harm our consumers.

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

None to the best of knowledge.

Sincerely,

/S/ Eric M. Higashihara
Eric M. Higashihara
May 10, 2020