

# HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

May 12, 2020  
Rm. 016, 10:00 a.m.

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
The Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Judiciary

From: William D. Hoshijo, Executive Director, Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission  
Robin Wurtzel, Chief Counsel, Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

**LATE**

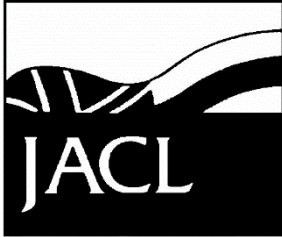
## G.M. No. 750

G.M. No. 750 submits the nomination of Liann Ebesugawa to the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC), for Senate consideration and confirmation. If confirmed, this would be Commissioner Ebesugawa’s second term. Most recently, Commissioner Ebesugawa has served as HCRC Chair from July 1, 2019, through the present.

The HCRC has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

The statutory qualifications for HCRC Commissioners are laid out in HRS § 368-2(a): “The members appointed to the commission shall be selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in civil rights matters and on the basis of a demonstrated commitment to the preservation of the civil rights of all individuals.”

HCRC staff are appreciative of the contributions Liann Ebesugawa has made as an HCRC Commissioner for the past four years, her leadership as Chair since July 2019, and her willingness to continue to serve. Ms. Ebesugawa brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the Commission, and an impressive record of demonstrated commitment to civil rights for Hawai‘i’s people. Her background in business, government, law, and civil rights advocacy have added valuable perspective to the work of the Commission, and we welcome the opportunity to work with Ms. Ebesugawa for another term.



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## JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

HONOLULU CHAPTER

P.O. BOX 1291, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96807

EMAIL: [honolulu@jacl.org](mailto:honolulu@jacl.org) WEBSITE: [www.jaclhonolulu.org](http://www.jaclhonolulu.org)

*Working For A Greater America*

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May 5, 2020

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To: Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Labor

From: Geoff J. Sogi, President  
Japanese American Citizens League – Honolulu Chapter

Re: SUPPORT OF GM750 Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission, Gubernatorial  
Nominee, LIANN EBESUGAWA

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee:

The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) – Honolulu Chapter strongly supports the nomination of Liann Ebesugawa to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC).

Founded in 1929, JACL is the nation's oldest and largest Asian Pacific American civil rights organization established to challenge racism and bigotry directed against Japanese Americans. Locally, our organization works to protect the civil and human rights of all. This work includes advocating for Native Hawaiian self-determination, defending immigrant rights, and protecting migrant health care rights under the Compact of Free Association (COFA).

Ms. Ebesugawa is a past president of the JACL-Honolulu Chapter and continues to serve as a dedicated member of our Board of Directors. During her time as board president she provided balanced and strong leadership in addressing complex issues related to marriage equality, homelessness, Native Hawaiian self-determination, and many other civil rights issues facing our community. Ms. Ebesugawa will continue to bring an unmatched intellect and the distinct capacity to understand civil rights from the perspectives of the State, private sector, and as an advocate to the HCRC. JACL-Honolulu has the utmost confidence in her ability to serve effectively on and make significant contributions to the HCRC.

For these reasons, JACL-Honolulu Chapter strongly supports Ms. Liann Ebesugawa's nomination to the HCRC and respectfully urges the Committee to approve her nomination.

Sincerely,

/s/ Geoff J. Sogi

Geoff J. Sogi  
President

Dina Shek  
Honolulu, HI 96822

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2020

**RE: Support for Nomination of Liann Ebesugawa  
to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (GM 750)**

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to support the nomination of Liann Ebesugawa to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC). In my professional position as the Legal Director of the Medical-Legal Partnership in Hawai'i and a Faculty Specialist at the William S. Richardson School of Law, I have had the privilege of working with Ms. Ebesugawa on a range of community justice matters. I deeply appreciate her leadership and her commitment to community engagement, often working alongside the communities most in need. Ms. Ebesugawa engages her strong relationships with diverse community members to bring civil rights knowledge to communities, and she brings her community understanding back to the work of the HCRC.

Ms. Ebesugawa has a strong history of leadership and commitment to civil rights, as demonstrated through her work with the Japanese American Citizens League (Honolulu Chapter) and the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (Hawaii Chapter). I have worked closely with Ms. Ebesugawa on several projects addressing equal rights and dignity for Micronesian and immigrant communities in Hawai'i. She always brings a thoughtful and diligent approach, bridging critical inquiry and analysis with the lived realities of those affected by the lack of civil rights protections. This is true not only for ethnic and immigrant communities, but also for LGBTQ, Muslim, and others targeted for unequal treatment.

I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic support for her nomination to this important Commission. Please vote to CONFIRM the nomination of Liann Ebesugawa to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

Thank you for your consideration,



Dina Shek

May12, 2020

To: Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair  
Honorable Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Jacce S. Mikulanec

Re: SUPPORT OF GM750 Hawaii Civil Rights Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, LIANN  
EBESUGAWA

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in **support of GM750**, recommending Liann Ebesugawa be confirmed to serve on the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission (HCRC).

I have had the privilege of serving alongside Ms. Ebesugawa on the Japanese American Citizens League-Honolulu Chapter (JACL) for the past ten years. During this period of time, both as a fellow board member and during her term as president, I witnessed Liann's capacity to effectively and successfully lead her fellow board members and the broader community through some of the most challenging civil rights issues facing our state.

In particular, Liann has the distinct ability to not only lead on complex civil rights issues but, also listen and build consensus where consensus does not initially exist. In our work together on the JACL board I frequently experienced Liann's capacity to broaden her fellow board members' understanding of an issue from a uniquely civil rights perspective; for example, on the issues of homelessness and immigration.

I was personally impressed with Liann's leadership of JACL during the successful effort to pass Hawaii's marriage equality legislation. While JACL has a long history of supporting marriage equality, Liann was especially committed to making sure that our chapter was at the forefront when it came to supporting the passage of SB1. She worked to leverage JACL's resources to support the local grassroots campaign and personally made the marriage equality issue a top priority for our Chapter. As a spokesperson for JACL, Liann effectively and insightfully made the clear link between marriage equality and the fight for justice and equality that Japanese- Americans sought in the wake of Executive Order 9066 and internment.

She is one of the most dedicated and professionally exacting individuals I have ever had the privilege to work with and learn from. Her understanding of the struggles facing many of Hawaii's minority communities is impressive and sincere. Her commitment to public service and making Hawaii a safer and more equitable place to call home is evidenced through her professional and personal work.

Thank you for allowing me to offer this testimony in **support** of GM750.

Respectfully,



Jacce S. Mikulanec

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/10/2020 11:04:16 AM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Gary Slovin	Testifying for Ashford & Wriston	Support	No

Comments:

I am pleased to submit testimony in strong support of the nomination of Liann Ebesugawa to serve as a member of the Civil Rights Commission. I have known Liann for nearly twenty years, first as an associate at the Goodsill law firm, and then in her various roles at the Board of Education and in her roles at both HECO and HEI. Liann is highly competent, but, more than that, she is extraordinarily compassionate. Throughout her career she has been a community leader and contributor. She is simply an extraordinary person. I know she will be an excellent member of the Commission.

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/11/2020 8:05:35 AM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Bianca Isaki	Individual	Support	No

Comments:



**Hawaiian  
Electric**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

**Governor's Message 750  
Consideration and Confirmation of Civil Rights Commission,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, LIANN EBESUGAWA, for a term to expire 06-30-2024**

Tuesday, May 12, 2020  
10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 016

Darcy Endo Omoto  
Vice President, Government and Community Affairs  
Hawaiian Electric Company

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and Committee members,

My name is Darcy Endo-Omoto and I am testifying in support of **Governor's Message (GM) 750**, in consideration and confirmation of Liann Y. Ebesugawa's nomination to the Hawaii State Civil Rights Commission (HSCRC) for a second term. I have known Ms. Ebesugawa for 18 years and I truly believe she has the experience, temperament and demeanor which will positively support the HSCRC in its policy-making and adjudicatory functions.

Ms. Ebesugawa has been actively involved in the Japanese American Citizens League, National Association of Japanese American Bar Association, Estria Foundation, as well as participating in Commission forums locally and nationally. Ms. Ebesugawa truly has a passion for the overall well-being of making the community a better place to live for everyone.

Accordingly, I strongly support Ms. Ebesugawa's nomination for a second term to the Hawaii State Civil Rights Commission. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify in support of Governor's Message 750.



**SanHi**

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

A LIMITED LIABILITY LAW PARTNERSHIP

DATE: May 11, 2020

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads  
Chair, Committee on Judiciary  
*Submitted Via Capitol Website*

FROM: Mihoko Ito

RE: **GM 750- Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Civil Rights Commission, Gubernatorial Nominee, LIANN EBESUGAWA, for a term to expire 06-30-2024.**  
**Hearing Date: Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Conference Room: 016**

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Dear Chair Rhoads and Members of the Committee Judiciary:

I respectfully offer this testimony in **strong support** of Liann Ebesugawa's appointment to the Civil Rights Commission.

I have known Liann in a personal and professional capacity for almost two decades. I can confidently say that she is one of the most outstanding people I know – very hard working, smart, caring and compassionate. She has unwavering integrity and is always driven by doing the right thing. We have worked together in various capacities over the years, and I have without hesitation trusted and relied on her advice and opinion on many occasions. I know personally that when Liann commits to doing something, she gives it her all.

The Civil Rights Commission is fortunate to have had Liann serving on the Commission since 2017, and for her to be willing to extend her term of service. As an organization committed to upholding civil rights and pursuing justice for the people of Hawaii, I cannot think of a better person than Liann to continue to the Commission's goals.

For the above reasons I strongly support Liann's nomination and request that the Committee advise and consent to her nomination to the Civil Rights Commission.



**LATE**

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/11/2020 11:52:57 AM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Healthy Pacific	Testifying for HealthyPacific.Net	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

HealthyPacific.Net offers its **STRONG SUPPORT** for the reappointment of Ms. Liann Ebesugawa to the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

Ms. Ebesugawa has demonstrated a deep and unwavering commitment to ensuring that the civil and human rights of all members of Hawai'i's communities are upheld in our policies and laws. She has been a critical advocate and ally for the health inequities and related challenges facing our COFA communities in particular and her sense of justice and demonstrated commitment to public and community service has been an inspiration for our continuing work. We have the fullest confidence that Ms. Ebesugawa will continue to be a thoughtful, diligent, and invaluable member of the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission and fully support and appreciate her recommitment to its work.

Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Ms. Ebesugawa's reappointment.

The HealthyPacific.Net Team

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/11/2020 12:00:14 PM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

**LATE**

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

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in STRONG SUPPORT of Liann Ebesugawa's nomination for a second term on the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission.

**LATE**

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/11/2020 3:01:45 PM  
Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Allicyn Tasaka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have known Liann Ebesugawa for over 10 years through our association as volunteers with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL). We both served as President. Liann has strong leadership skills, legal experience and conviction to advocate for fairness and equality for all people, and commitment to serve organizations that honor her beliefs. Liann has served admirably for one term as a Commissioner and deserves to continue her work with the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. I stand in strong support of Liann's nomination. Thank you.

**LATE**

**LATE**

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/12/2020 10:24:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Eric Yamamoto	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

May 9, 2020

Hawaii State Legislature

Committee on Judiciary

Chair Senator Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Jarrett Keohokalole

Hearing: Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Conference Room 016,

State Capitol

Re: Letter of Support for Civil Rights Commission Gubernatorial Nominee GM 750

Liann Ebesugawa

Dear Judiciary Committee:

I write to most strongly encourage your confirmation of Liann Ebesugawa for the Hawai'i Civil Rights Commission. Ms. Ebesugawa is a dedicated public servant, has long been actively involved in civil rights and social justice issues, is exceedingly intelligent and knowledgeable about Hawai'i issues of law and justice and is insightful, thoughtful, fair and collegial. She will be a substantial continuing contributor to the important work of the Civil Rights Commission.

I write as the Fred T. Korematsu Professor of Law and Social Justice at the William S. Richardson School of Law (I am writing on my own behalf). My areas of specialty include civil rights and human rights. I teach and write in the field of social justice. I first got to know Ms. Ebesugawa when she was a University of Hawai'i graduate student researching and writing about race and ethnicity in Hawai'i. Her concerns and insights, along with her analytical rigor and her passion for contributing to a better Hawai'i, impressed me. I, and others, encouraged her to acquire legal training as part of the next steps in her professional development. At the law school, Ms. Ebesugawa was an outstanding student in my year-long Civil Procedure course for first-year students as well as a top student in my upper level Racial Justice and Complex Litigation seminars.

Because of her intellect and work ethic and her interest in social justice issues, I asked to her serve as my research assistant and to become a Scholar Advocate (part of a special training program I'd been developing for students with commitments to justice work). Her truly outstanding work led me to collaborate with her as co-authors on a major chapter on redress for the World War II Japanese American Internment in the

seminal International Reparations Handbook in 2006. Our jointly authored chapter is still cited regularly.

After her graduation, Ms. Ebesugawa clerked for a progressive Supreme Court Justice, Simeon Acoba, who was known for his careful opinions on issues of civil rights and criminal justice. During her clerkship and her subsequent work with a major downtown law firm and then the Island Insurance Company we kept in regular touch. I know that her decision later to work for the Board of Education stemmed fully from her desire to make a meaningful contribution to steps forward on perhaps the most thorny and pressing local issue in Hawai'i: public school education.

I also have seen Ms. Ebesugawa actualizing her concern for social justice through her long-standing grassroots and leadership work with the Japanese American Citizens League – Honolulu. The JACL Honolulu is considered the most active and forward thinking of all the JACL chapters across the nation. It has been a leader in support of Native Hawaiian self-determination, same gender marriage, Micronesian medical care, Kamehameha Schools admissions and fair treatment of Muslims in America, among other things. Ms. Ebesugawa has been deeply involved in organizing, analyzing, collaborating, communicating and advocating on these issues – all in a powerful yet very grounded and balanced way. And as she became a key part of the leadership of the Honolulu chapter, I saw her emerge as a genuine leader. And a tireless worker.

Through my interactions with Ms. Ebesugawa, and particularly through her leadership, the JACL Honolulu chapter has become a friend of the court in numerous amicus briefs I co-authored to the Hawai'i Federal District Court, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court, including a brief in the Trump v. Hawaii “travel ban” challenge. It has also been a signatory to op-ed essays to the newspapers and been a sponsor for many public educational forums of civil and human rights issues – including the 75th anniversary commemoration of the Japanese American Internment spotlighting present-day issues of “National Security and Democratic Liberties”.

As a Civil Rights Commissioner, and now Chair, Ms. Ebesugawa has been assertive and creative in her work on behalf of Hawai'i's communities. She participated in the hiring of excellent new Commission legal counsel and staff. She continues to network with laypeople, lawyers and community advocates as well as businesspeople, government officials and policymakers. And she engages in important Commission public outreach and education. For example, a Commission/HUD sponsored educational forum that brought together public sector (HUD - local & national, the HCRC, the Commission on the Status of Women), private sector (American Savings Bank), non-profits and union representatives.

For all these reasons, Ms. Ebesugawa is ideally suited to continue her service on the Civil Rights Commission. She thoroughly deserves to be reappointed to the Commission and to be confirmed as its Chair. Her intellect, commitment to justice work, scholarship, organizing skills and vision, thoughtful advocacy, diverse work experiences in the private and public sectors and her collegial approach to problem solving – all

demonstrated by her outstanding recent work on the Commission and her service as Commission Chair – will enable her to make continuing contributions to the Commission’s important justice work for our Hawai`i communities.

Sincerely,

/s/ Eric K. Yamamoto

Fred T. Korematsu Professor of Law and Social Justice

William S. Richardson School of Law

**LATE**

**LATE**

**GM-750**

Submitted on: 5/12/2020 6:51:09 PM

Testimony for JDC on 5/12/2020 10:00:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Present at Hearing</b>
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

Respondent: Liann Ebesugawa

Re: Nomination to the Civil Rights Commission, Governor's Message No. 750

1. Please describe your understanding of the role and jurisdiction of the Civil Rights Commission.

The Commission is responsible for enforcement of the laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, public accommodations, real property transactions and access to services receiving state financial assistance. Beyond the very technical definition, I believe the ultimate role of the Commission is to ensure a fairer more just community.

2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the Commission?

As a member of the Commission, I see my role as effectuating the duties of the Commission as stated above. Specifically, Commissioners play key roles in ensuring the fair adjudication of contested cases that go to hearing and supporting civil rights policy-making, including rulemaking for the Commission and positions offered in testimonies on legislation. I believe that as a volunteer community member, I have an obligation to serve in my capacity as a member of the Commission to the best of my abilities and in a way that supports and enhances the effectiveness and integrity of the agency.

3. Why do you wish to continue to serve as a member of the Commission? Please note if you initially applied to be nominated to the Commission or if you were invited to apply.

I had applied in 2017 to be a member of the Commission and gratefully, I was confirmed at that time. When my term was nearing completion, I again applied to the Governor's office to serve a second term. I have found the work at the Commission to be extremely rewarding and I believe that the agency does its very best to protect our community. I have been honored to be a part of that work in my capacity as a member of the Commission. I remain deeply passionate about working in our community and ensuring that service and volunteerism is a consistent priority in my life. Additionally, I think my interests and prior experience can continue to be of service to the Commission.

4. Please describe why you believe that you are qualified to be a member of the Commission, and discuss any skills, expertise, knowledge, or volunteer involvement that would aid in your decision-making ability.



I am an active community member with a background in civil rights advocacy, government service and employment law. I believe my work experience and community involvement has been helpful to the Commission. I have both private and public sector experience which has helped me to understand how important the balance of these interests are to a vibrant thriving community. I have had broad private practice experience as an attorney, which allowed me the opportunity to work with a variety of industries and develop skills at various levels of business. I have represented government, union and private industry in employment matters. I have also served as an administrator for a state board. Most recently, I was an attorney for the state's electric utility and I am now an attorney for its publicly traded holding company.

As a community volunteer, I have held leadership roles in professional and non-profit organizations and co-founded a non-profit organization. The leadership roles I have held allows me to understand the importance of having accountability and measurable outcomes, and how to achieve and implement policies to obtain these goals. While serving as president of the Hawaii Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, one of the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organizations, we assisted with Hawaii's successful marriage equality campaign and garnered national organizational support for COFA migrants.

5. What do you hope to accomplish during your second term as a member of the Commission?

As with my first term, I would like to be sure that I have contributed to protecting the rights of our community. I would like to be able to see a community that understands and utilizes the services of the Commission. I would also hope to continue to support the purpose of the Commission so that the office can ensure that it will continue to make significant impact on our communities for years to come.

6. What issues do you believe that the Commission has handled well in the past? What issues do you believe that the Commission should address in the future?

I believe one of the unique benefits of the Commission is that it offers to the state expertise in the area of civil rights issues both through its day-to-day activities of enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and presenting before the legislature. Having the Commission available to bring civil rights perspectives and credible information (not as advocates but as agency experts) on a range of issues, which have sometimes been controversial or unpopular, advances the state's and public's interest in a fairer more just society.

Given the current state of the world, it will be imperative that the Commission address effective provision of services. This will mean exploring alternative technical support systems and ways of working. In essence, the Commission will need to grow and change to accommodate the changing needs of our

communities.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your continued service on the Commission? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

I do not believe there are any conflicts of interest. As Commissioners we recuse ourselves from a case when a conflict arises or to avoid an appearance of a conflict.

8. Is there any other information regarding your experience and background that you believe should be considered for your nomination?

I believe my work and volunteer community experience supports my confirmation to the Commission as it demonstrates a commitment to the betterment of our community and to the development of my knowledge both legal and practical that I hope can continue to assist the Commission in its work.

9. Is there anything in your background that might be deemed as negative or controversial by the Senate?

No.