

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR

JOSH GREEN
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



LESLIE WILKINS
CHAIRPERSON

ALLICYN C.H. TASAKA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
830 Punchbowl Street, Suite 417, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Phone: (808) 586-8630 Web: <http://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/>

February 24, 2021

To: The Honorable Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair, and
Members of the Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

Date: Wednesday, February 24, 2021
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 225

From: Allicyn Tasaka, Executive Director
Hawaii Workforce Development Council

Re: GM 596 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Kira Higa, for a term to expire at 06-30-2024.

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts. I am Allicyn Tasaka, Executive Director of the Workforce Development Council (WDC) testifying in strong support of Ms. Kira Higa's confirmation to the WDC for a term to expire on June 30, 2024. Ms. Higa would fill a slot reserved for a business executive member on the Council.

The WDC is responsible for the administrative oversight and implementation of a federally mandated initiative, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). Additionally, the WDC assists the Administration develop and update statewide comprehensive, strategic workforce development plans and actions to align and streamline the public workforce development system for continuous improvement and accountability. It supports employment opportunities for employers and employees through direct services at the American Job Centers throughout the State.

Ms. Higa is the Director of Human Resources for Hawaiian Telcom. She has worked her way up at the company since 2009 as a Collection Analyst to Benefits Coordinator, Labor Relations Manager, and to Senior HR Manager and to her present position. She also spent four years as Trustee Secretary at the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

Ms. Higa has been attending the WDC board quarterly meetings to familiarize herself with the workings of the organization and learning of important issues the WDC is

working on. It is hoped that she will serve on the Employer Engagement Committee where she can share her knowledge and experience on training, upskilling workers and successful employee-employer business practices.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Ms. Higa's nomination to the WDC.

Written Statement of
Kira Higa
Human Resources Director

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CULTURE, AND THE ARTS
GM596

February 24, 2021 3:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225, Videoconference

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members,

It would be a privilege to be considered to serve on the Hawaii Workforce Development Council (WDC). With my vast experience in human resources and demonstrated commitment to our State, I look forward to exploring innovative solutions that proactively position Hawaii's current and future workforce.

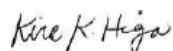
With my education, experience, and passion for workforce development, I can positively contribute to WDC's mission to create a globally competitive, skilled workforce that nurtures our economy and preserves our special quality of life here in Hawaii. I have more than 10 years of experience managing human resources for Hawaiian Telcom, and a background in behavioral science. I currently lead Hawaiian Telcom's human resources department, and am responsible for effectively designing, implementing, and executing innovative programs and initiatives. I am very interested in recruiting and retaining talent, not only for Hawaiian Telcom, but for our State. My greatest strength is finding innovative solutions to complex problems, a skill I will bring to WDC as we explore how to create and foster a resilient workforce in Hawaii.

As a human resources professional, my goal is to develop the systems, tools, and culture necessary to enable our Hawaiian Telcom team to continue building and acquiring skills, knowledge and experience that they can use at work and extend them into our community across our State. I am extremely passionate about creating opportunities in our beautiful State by equipping our people with the skills they need to be part of a workforce that's ready for the future.

I am confident that I can contribute to WDC's vision, and look forward to applying my experience and background to help Hawaii.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Kira Higa

HR Director
Hawaiian Telcom

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 8:40:39 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Asiana Ponciano	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

As a fellow Patsy T Mink Leadership Alliance Cohort 3 member, I wholeheartedly endorse Kira Higa for the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. She is a veteran Human Resources professional with a passion for growing and developing a thriving economy through investing in local talent. Kira is a passionate professional who will add a diverse viewpoint to the council. Mahalo for your consideration.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 6:28:26 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Colleen McAluney	Testifying for Patsy T. Mink Center for Business & Leadership Women's Business Center	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha LCA Chair Brian Taniguchi,

I support Kira Higa's nomination to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

As the HR Director for Hawaiian Telcom, Kira would bring her vast knowledge and experience to the Council and would be an invaluable contributor towards much needed workforce development in Hawaii.

As a Patsy T. Mink Leadership Alliance graduate, Kira was an integral leader in her cohort. She created collaborative, innovative solutions to both session breakouts and their community project, Gilrs' Summit, focused on empowering high school girls with leadership and career development.

Thank you for your consideration,

Colleen McAluney

Director, Patsy T. Mink Center for Business & Leadership at YWCA Oahu

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 5:39:05 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jason Thune	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have known Kira for just about ten years and almost all of it entirely in her HR role. She has a tremendous amount of knowledge around benefits as well as employee/labor relations. Kira's approach to any type of issue is to actively listen to both sides and come up with an effective solution.

She is a tremendous supporter of creating a job market to attract our next generation of workers. Over the course of this summer, we brought on an intern from Generation Z to evaluate and recommend how to make our state a place to transform our community and create meaningful technical jobs.

Kira's involvement as a part of the Workforce Development Council will tremendously benefit the State's goals to diversify our economy and therefore I fully support her role on the WDC.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/21/2021 9:45:00 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sarah Guay	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing in support of Kira Higa's nomination to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. I have had the pleasure of knowing Kira professionally through our mutual involvement in the Patsy T. Mink Leadership Alliance program. During our time together in the program, Kira consistently demonstrated strong leadership skills. She excelled at clearly articulating challenges and generating creative solutions. She was skilled at strategic thinking, often taking others' examples and extrapolating a specific issue to a larger context. Finally, she demonstrated a gift for "out of the box" thinking and innovation. I have no doubt her skills in these areas would be a positive addition to the Council and strongly support her nomination.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Sarah Guay

ALAN S. HAYASHI
207-4 Kawaihae Street
Honolulu, Hawaii

February 24, 2021

To: Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair and
Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: Alan S. Hayashi, Vice Chair
Workforce Development Council

RE: GM 594 thru GM 605 **Gubernatorial Nominees:** Charles Shima / Jason Brand / Kira Higa / Ian Kitajima / Brian Tatsumura / Cary Miyashiro / Ken Loui / April Chun Acquavella / Brian Lee / Jason Bradshaw, to the Workforce Development Council for varying terms to expire June 30, 2023 to June 30, 2025

Hearing: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 225

POSITION: Strong Support for GM 594 thru GM 605

Good afternoon Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara and members of the Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts, I am Alan Hayashi, Vice Chair of the Workforce Development Council (WDC) testifying in strong support of ALL ABOVE LISTED NOMINEES for confirmation to the WDC for varying terms to expire on June 30, 2023 thru June 30, 2025. The Nominees would fill slots reserved for designated sectors on the Council.

The WDC is an attached agency to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and is responsible for advising the Governor and Legislature on workforce development to support economic development and employment opportunities for employers and employees. The WDC is the State Workforce Development Board for purposes of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014. The WDC assists the Governor in developing and updating comprehensive, strategic workforce development plans and oversees publicly funded workforce investment activities in the state.

All Nominees are well qualified and leaders in their respective organizations and sectors. We on the WDC Board feel fortunate to have such diverse talent willing to join the effort to provide job opportunities and skills training for our community

In this critical year, WDC has been implementing the Hawaii WIOA Unified State Plan. The plan covers the six core formula grant programs authorized under WIOA and outlines the state's vision and strategy for carrying out activities under each program. The WIOA plan is a Federal requirement in order for Hawaii to receive the bulk of federal funding for the State's primary job training and placement activities.

I respectfully urge you to confirm all submitted Nominees as members of the Workforce Development Council where they will be valuable assets to the deliberations of the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this matter.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/20/2021 11:08:34 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sunshine Topping	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing to strongly support Kira Higa's candidacy to serve on the Workforce Development Counsel. I have had the priveledge of serving on the Counsel for the past several years, and feel that Kira's knowledge of the local workforce, it's benefits and challenges, could greatly contribute to the important work that the counsel performs.

Kira worked for me for several years at Hawaiian Telcom and I can attest to her intelligence, her knowledge of the local workforce, and her love of this community. The WDC would be very lucky to have her.

Mahalo,

Sunshine Topping

Sr. Vice President, Human Resources

Hawaii Pacific Health

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/19/2021 5:55:03 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ben Morgan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Council Members,

Please accept this testimony in favor of Kira Higa for appointment to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

I have worked with Ms. Higa extensively in various roles within our company, and I am testifying as an individual citizen. I believe she would be a great addition to the Council, contributing both her extensive knowledge and experience with regards to HR and Labor issues, but also a pragmatic and balanced viewpoint that will inform and guide.

Ms. Higa has been a great partner as we navigate complex employment issues, and is able to seamlessly transition between advising employees and managers, and delivering updates to an executive audience. She is both humble and assertive.

Thank you for this opportunity to voice my support of Ms. Higa.

Ben Morgan, VP Customer Operations - Hawaiian Telcom

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/19/2021 4:53:17 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Francis Alueta	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chairman Brian Taniguchi and Committee members,

I have known and worked with Kira Higa on a number of HR related matters over the past several years. In 2020 we worked closely on the COVID19 pandemic issues.

I have found her to be extremely knowledgeable in areas of labor relations and human resources. Kira has consistently demonstrated creative and imaginative solutions to the problems we had to solve. She will be a valuable member of the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

Kindest Regards,

Francis Alueta

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 7:02:35 AM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kevin Paul	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have had the pleasure of working with Kira Higa for a number of years. During this time I have seen Kira tackle many difficult problems and drive them all to a successful conclusion through collaboration and creative problem solving always utilizing team work to solve the issue in front of her. Kira is often asked to help our organization accept change and, in fact, be a change agent for the organization. Kira's interpersonal skills give her a unique perspective when helping others embrace change and Kira will utilize these skills to help teams or individuals see the big picture and, in doing so, recognize the positive that will come with the change. Kira uses a combination of strong leadership skills, effective communication skills and the ability to help others see the big picture to be an incredibly effective leader at Hawaiian Telcom.

Regards,

Kevin Paul

SVP, Business Services - Hawaiian Telcom

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 10:37:10 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kirk Shitaoka	Testifying for Hawaiian Telcom	Support	No

Comments:

February 22, 2021

TO: Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair

Senator Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair

Members of the Committee on Labor, Culture, and the Arts

FROM: Kirk Shitaoka, Director – Finance

Hawaiian Telcom

RE: GM596 Kira Higa – Nominee to Serve as a Member of the Workforce Development Council

Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara, and Committee Members:

I enthusiastically and **strongly support** Governor Ige’s nomination of Ms. Kira Higa to the Hawai’i Workforce Development Council (WDC).

I have worked with Kira for nearly ten years at Hawaiian Telcom, during which time I have collaborated with her on numerous occasions. I know Kira to possess the utmost professionalism, integrity and judgment that will serve her and others on the WDC well in executing its vital work and mission. As a key member of the Hawaiian Telcom leadership team, and her background as a human resources professional with many years of experience in her field, Kira is eminently qualified to serve on the WDC.

Kira has a deep appreciation and understanding of economic development and employment opportunities and challenges for employers and employees in our state. She will bring fresh insights and ideas to the WDC, and I believe she will always approach issues with an open mind.

In closing, I respectfully urge this Committee to confirm Ms. Kira Higa to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

Kirk Shitaoka

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/22/2021 9:35:22 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ani Menon	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing to express my strong support of Kira Higa's confirmation to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council (HWDC). I have worked with Kira for over three years. She exemplifies the qualities of someone that I would trust to make important decisions that will impact our state's future.

Now more than ever, we need leaders like Kira who are committed to serving Hawaii and our residents. There is much to accomplish, both in tackling our state's comprehensive plan for workforce development, and in identifying and developing state policies and funding priorities to adopt in order to address the unmet workforce and economic development needs across our state.

From my experience working with Kira, she tackles challenges head on, never shies away from an onerous task, and is a creative problem solver and team player. It is for these reasons that I believe she will be an excellent asset to HWDC.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my support.



February 23, 2021

Aloha Chair Brian Taniguchi and the members of the Senate Labor, Culture, and the Arts committee. My first name is Amber and my last name is Baugh. I am the Vice President Employee Client Services for Cincinnati Bell/HT. It is my honor to provide a testimony on behalf of my employee Kira Higa. Kira has been my employee for over two years, but has been an employee of Hawaiian Telcom for over eleven years! She is truly a testament of what it means to be not only be a loyal employee to an essential employer of Hawaii, but also what it means to be a loyal Hawaiian native. Kira is always thinking about what decisions will mean to the company but also to her community. She continually has creative ideas on activities where we can collaborate with academia, outreach programs, and other community initiatives. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amber Baugh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amber Baugh

VP – Employee Client Services

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 12:10:22 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gary Peddicord	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support Kira Higa's nomination to be a member of the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. I have had the pleasure to work with Kira over the last three years through her position as Hawaiian Telcom's HR Director. She is very passionate and committed to her work. I am confident that she will use these qualities to become a respected Council member.

Written Statement of
Su Shin
President & General Manager

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, CULTURE AND THE ARTS

February 24, 2021 3:00PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 225, Videoconference

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT FOR:

GM 596 - SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, KIRA HIGA, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2024.

To: Chair Taniguchi, Vice-Chair Ihara, and Members of the Committee

Re: **Testimony in support for GM 596**

Aloha Honorable Chair, Vice-Chair, and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on GM 596. I am pleased and honored to submit this testimony in support of Kira Higa's nomination as a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. I have worked closely with Ms. Higa for the past seven years as she serves as an important member of Hawaiian Telcom's leadership team. She provides vital oversight of our Human Resources department, including managing our overall employee and labor relations functions.

Ms. Higa has more than a decade of experience in the telecommunications and technology sector, the majority of that time spent in progressively responsible roles in human resources. The breadth and depth of her experience has proven invaluable at Hawaiian Telcom, however, her character and ability to work collaboratively, effectively bridging divides, are her most valued and admired traits.

Ms. Higa's deep understanding of human resources and workforce development strategies and tactics coupled with her impeccable reputation as a dedicated professional with high integrity will be a tremendous asset to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. Therefore, I provide my confident and enthusiastic endorsement of Ms. Higa as I believe that the state would truly benefit from her appointment to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

Finally, I strongly support Ms. Higa's nomination to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council based upon her knowledge of human resources and workforce development strategies, her demonstrated experience and leadership, and her willingness to serve our community.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 12:48:09 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Francis Choe	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am happy to support the nomination of Kira Higa to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. Given her vast professional experience in human resources and leadership roles at Hawaiian Telcom, Kira will be a tremendous asset to the Council.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 2:35:53 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shareen Higa	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I am writing in support of Kira Higa's nomination to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. I have worked with Kira Higa in different capacity since 2013. Mrs. Higa has proved to be a valuable key member of the leadership team at Hawaiian Telcom. She has contributed innovative ideas and solutions to the workforce in support of the company's business goals and initiatives. She always welcomes collaboration, provides support and engagement wherever needed, and never shy's away from a challenge. She is a huge asset to the community.

Date: February 23, 2021

To: Hawaii State Legislature
Senate Committee on Labor, Culture and the Arts

From: Malcolm Tajiri
Noreen Louie
Marisa Mamizuka

Subject: **GM596**
Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, KIRA HIGA, for a term to expire 06-30-2024

Brown & Brown Pacific Insurance Services, Inc. (Brown & Brown Pacific) **SUPPORTS** GM596, which would confirm Kira Higa to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

As representatives of Brown & Brown Pacific's Employee Benefits Consulting team, we have had the honor and privilege of working with Ms. Higa during her former capacity as the Senior Manager of Benefits at Hawaiian Telcom. We have found her to be a quick study and valuable contributor. With her experience and perspective during negotiations and acquisitions, she is acutely aware of short and long term strategies necessary to retain and engage a committed workforce; these will be assets to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

We wholeheartedly offer our support of Ms. Higa and urge the Senate Committee's favorable confirmation of her nomination.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 9:33:28 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
carynn ueoka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I met Ms. Kira Higa in January 2020, right before the pandemic put us all on lock down. During unprecedented times in which we were all struggling with a new normal, Ms Higa's outstanding leadership qualities helped her team to excel. While juggling online schooling, childcare, mandatory statewide shutdowns, and working in telework environment she found creative ways to encourage her teammates and consistently put forth a 100% effort into every task. Ms. Higa is an integral part to the team's success. The Hawaii Workforce Development Council would benefit greatly from Ms. Higa's can-do positive attitude and her tenacity to succeed. I support Ms. Kira Higa and strongly recommend her appointment to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council.

February 22, 2021

Senate Labor, Culture, and the Arts (LCA)

Senator Brian Taniguchi

415 S. Beretania Street #219

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Hawaii Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee-Kira Higa

Dear Senator Taniguchi,

I am writing to strenuously recommend Kira Higa for the assignment to the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. Kira would be a great addition to the Council.

I have known Kira for twenty five years, first as she was finishing her high school years at Kamehameha Schools, Kapalama campus, then while she attended Concordia University and now as the HR Director at Hawaiian Telcom where I've been employed for 42 years. I am currently the Director-Business Sales at Hawaiian Telcom.

Kira would be a fine member of the Hawaii Workforce Development Council as she has been a fierce advocate of enhancing the Human Resource department at Hawaiian Telcom. Kira has always been a person to develop, negotiate and support employees. She has an innovative mind and is quick to assess more efficient manner for completing tasks. Kira was always one dedicated to efficiency, creating new procedures and a relentless seeker of facts to support both the employee and the company. Her positive attitude flourishes even in the heat of battle.

Kira is not only dedicated to her position as HR Director and her employees at Hawaiian Telcom, but also her family. She has a strong sense of community and continues to play a big role in helping Hawaiian Telcom stay relevant to our community and our customers.

I highly recommend Kira to be a member of the Hawaii Workforce Development Council. If I can answer any other questions about my knowledge of Kira, I would welcome any questions. I can be reached at 808-546-3534 or phyllis.freitas@hawaiiantel.com

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my comments.

Sincerely,

Phyllis K. Freitas

GM-596

Submitted on: 2/23/2021 9:46:01 PM

Testimony for LCA on 2/24/2021 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
JASMINE PORTER	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I have known Kira Higa for 20+ years and know she will do great work and will be an asset to the this state. With her experience in human resources along with her ability to effectively communicate with people, she will provide a tremendous amount of positive input to this council.