

Testimony of Donald Sakamoto Before the Committee on Judiciary (JDC) Hawaii State Senate Thirty-first legislature, regular session of 2022 April 6, 2022, 9:31 AM, hearing on GM592, appointment of James Gashel to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee

Good morning, Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and members. I am Donald Sakamoto, fully supporting James Gashel's appointment to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

As you may not know, James has been and continues to be a champion and strong advocate for persons with disabilities through his many years of service on the mainland with the National Federation of the Blind.

Furthermore, I have known and work with James Gashel as a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii since he moved here some time ago, and he is well-versed and has extensive knowledge regarding with the challenges issues that occurred during the last elections of 2020 and by submitting both oral and written testimony regarding with bill SB548 during the 2020 legislative session, and the implantation Act 213 relating to electronic authentication of special needs voters. In fact, he also serves as our legislative chair for our organization. As a blind individual Mr. Gashel is very diverse with federal laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the federal Voting Rights Act, and the Help America Vote Act makes him well qualified for appointment to this advisory committee through his extensive knowledge throughout the years. As a resident of Hawaii now, he brings the same passion and dedication to advocate for fair elections for those persons with disabilities here is evident and his wealth of knowledge is quite invaluable. .

Mahalo for your time and consideration of my strong recommendation for James.

**GM-592**

Submitted on: 4/2/2022 1:29:09 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/6/2022 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ann Lemke	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Hello Senator Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I wish to express my strong support for the appointment of Mr. James Gashel to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee. As is Mr. Gashel, I am also a member for a number of years of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. Mr. Gashel has taken a leadership role in our state with respect to advocating for the rights of blind persons. His input strongly influenced legislation creating county and state advisory committees, and he has tirelessly advocated for privacy and secrecy in the receipt and casting of electronically-verifiable ballots.

While his special expertise pertains to issues most directly affecting visually-impaired individuals, he supports all ethical and achievable means for all persons with disabilities to fully participate in primaries and general elections. Whether voting in person, by mail, or electronically, people with disabilities must enjoy the fullest range of verifiable options in voting.

Mr. Gashel will be an asset to the work of this committee.



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TESTIMONY OF GLEN TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK,  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
ON GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 592

SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO  
THE STATEWIDE VOTERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, JAMES GASHEL,  
FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2023

April 6, 2022

Chair Rhoads and Committee members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of GM592 to confirm the nomination of Mr. James Gashel to the Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee for a term to expire June 30, 2023.

Mr. Gashel currently serves as the Secretary for the Honolulu Chapter and the Statewide Legislative Chairman for the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). He continues to be involved in numerous community initiatives and has dedicated his life and energy to advocating for the blind and visually impaired. We are most excited for the opportunity to access his wealth of knowledge and perspectives to improve election services in Hawaii.

In his professional career of almost 34 years with the NFB, Mr. Gashel has championed significant changes to laws that directly affect the blind, thus earning the respect of thousands in community who have benefited from his advocacy.

Notwithstanding this nomination, we have already entered into discussions with Mr. Gashel to receive suggestions on improving accessibility to our services. Formalizing his role as a committee member and advisor to the election administration community is both highly anticipated and welcome as we prepare for the 2022 elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support for GM592.



DAVID Y. IGE  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII



ELIZABETH A. CHAR, M.D.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
STATE COUNCIL  
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES  
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING  
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813  
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543  
March 29, 2022

The Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads  
Senate Committee on Judiciary  
The Thirty-First Legislature  
State Capitol  
State of Hawai'i  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Rhoads and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: GM592 - Nomination of James Gashel to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities (DD) **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** GM592 for the nomination of James Gashel to sit on the statewide voters with special needs advisory committee.

Mr. Gashel has been very involved in his community and advocating for individuals with disabilities. He joined the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) in 1974, where his work led to significant changes affecting blind Americans. Mr. Gashel has received many awards for his outstanding leadership and service to the blind community. He will be a great asset to the Council in promoting systems change and advocating on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our strong support for GM592.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus  
Executive Administrator

**GM-592**

Submitted on: 4/1/2022 7:16:59 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/6/2022 9:31:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Louis Erteschik	Testifying for Hawaii Disability Rights Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As Executive Director of the Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC) I am pleased to support the appointment of James Gashel to be a member of the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee, responding to his nomination by Governor Ige in GM 592. HDRC is Hawaii's protection and advocacy system, serving persons with disabilities. Outreach and education, advocacy, and voter registration are included among the services we provide.

I first met Mr. Gashel in 2020 at a virtual meeting arranged by the NFB of Hawaii to address voting accessibility concerns of their members. The 2020 election was our state's first time implementing the new vote by mail law passed in 2019. The Help America Vote Act makes clear that voters with disabilities have the right to cast a secret ballot and vote in private, but this is a challenge when printed ballots are sent out to everyone by mail.

Mr. Gashel has been a leader here in Hawaii in working to address accessibility issues like this. His resume includes more than 33 years in governmental relations leadership positions at the National Federation of the Blind, and working to develop text to speech reading technology needed by persons with print disabilities. His leadership includes advocacy in passing voter assistance provisions added to the federal Voting Rights Act, Disability access provisions in the Help America Vote Act, and work with many others to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Based on what I know of Mr. Gashel and my observation of his work with the group during our virtual meeting, I am confident that his work on the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee will help to achieve important accessibility goals for persons with disabilities in our state. Mahalo for considering this appointment.



## DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

1010 Richards Street, Room 118 • Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
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April 6, 2022

### TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

Governor's Message 592 – Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the  
Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee  
within the Office of Elections, Gubernatorial Nominee, James Gashel for a Term to  
Expire June 30, 2023

The Disability and Communication Access Board supports the nomination of Mr. James Gashel to serve on the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee within the Office of Elections.

Mr. Gashel is eminently qualified to serve on the Committee. He is a person with a physical disability, blindness from birth, who has required assistance to vote in every election since 1968. He served for more than 33 years as an advocate and in leadership positions with the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). He currently serves as President of the NFB of Hawaii, Honolulu Chapter and as its statewide legislative chairman. Mr. Gashel was instrumental in bringing to fruition the world's first portable text to speech reading device for the blind.

Mr. Gashel would undoubtedly bring a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience to assist the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee in achieving the goal of ensuring that Hawaii's voters with special needs have equal and independent access to voter registration, casting ballots, and all other office of elections services.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW  
Executive Director



*Live the life you want.*

April 4, 2022

Testimony before the Committee on Judiciary (JDC) Hawaii State Senate  
Thirty-first legislature, regular session of 2022  
April 6, 2022, 9:30 AM, hearing on GM592

RE: Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee  
Appointment of James Gashel

Good morning Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and members.

I am Virgil Stinnett, testifying on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, supporting James Gashel's appointment to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

I serve as president of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. The Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee is being established pursuant to section 2 of Act 213, passed and signed into law in 2021. Important to this statute, you should know that all of the officers and virtually all members of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii are blind.

James Gashel is blind himself and especially well qualified for service on this new committee in our state. Beginning in January 1974, Mr. Gashel served for 33.5 years as director of government relations for our parent organization, the National Federation of the Blind, in Washington, DC. In this position he became one of the best known and most effective advocates for blind people in the United States. His leadership includes successful advocacy for important provisions in the federal Voting Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Help America Vote Act, closely relating to the special needs advisory committee's mission under Act 213.

Beginning in 2007, Mr. Gashel embarked on another 10 year career, working to develop and promote advanced reading technology for persons unable to read print due to blindness or other disabilities. As part of this effort he was instrumental in creating the world's first hand-held automated reader used to convert printed text into speech and Braille.

Now retired, Mr. Gashel is the volunteer legislative chair of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii. In this capacity he recommended and wrote language which the legislature adapted for the advisory committee and another provision in Act 213 relating to electronic authentication of special needs voters.

Speaking for our statewide organization, James Gashel is uniquely well qualified to serve on the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee. Knowing his dedication and ability to perform tasks expected, I am certain that Mr. Gashel will be an important voice on behalf of special needs voters and bring great credit to our state.

Mahalo for your consideration.



Brandon G. Young

Testimony of Brandon Young

Before the Committee on Judiciary (JDC)

Hawaii State Senate

Thirty-first legislature, regular session of 2022

April 6, 2022, 9:31 AM, hearing on GM592, appointment of James Gashel to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee

Good morning Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and members. I am Brandon Young, supporting James Gashel's appointment to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

I have known Mr. Gashel for a long time now and I have every faith that he will do an excellent as a part of the state-wide committee for Special Needs voters here in Hawaii. I first met Mr. Gashel when I was an intern at the National Center for the Blind. Mr. Gashel has worked for many years in Washington defending the rights of the blind as the Director of Governmental Affairs for the National Federation of the Blind. Mr. Gashel has a hand in many landmark pieces of legislation dealing with the blind and people with disabilities in our country. Mr. Gashel worked on the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Help America Vote Act and has a strong knowledge of the Randolph Shepard program for blind vendors. I know that Mr. Gashel is the right person for this committee and I am submitting testimony in support of his nomination. I want to thank you and your committee for hearing the nomination of Mr. Gashel. I urge you to pass the nomination of Mr. Gashel for the State-wide committee for Special Needs voters.

Testimony of James Gashel

Before the committee on Judiciary (JDC)

HAWAII STATE SENATE

Thirty-first legislature, regular session of 2022

April 6, 2022, 9:31 AM, hearing on GM592

Good morning Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members. I am James Gashel, nominated by Governor Ige in GM592 to the Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear and express my interest in serving. This Statewide Voters with Special Needs Advisory Committee was created by section 2 of Act 213 passed last year. I am legislative chair of the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii and among the principal proponents of the legislation creating this committee.

I have been blind since the day I was born. I have voted in every general and mid-term election from the year I reached age 21 to the present. I was 60 before the election technology allowed me to cast a completely private and independent ballot. That was possible due to accessible election technology purchased and required in the Help America Vote Act. I worked on that bill while serving as director of government relations at the National Federation of the Blind, a position I held for 33.5 years.

I moved to Hawaii when I retired and found right away that our brand new vote by mail system was lacking some needed accessibility features. The state's idea was that voters with disabilities could go to voter service centers and use the accessible machines while voters without disabilities could vote with convenience and privacy at home or in the office. That seemed inconsistent with the idea of equal rights and equal opportunity, particularly so when along came the pandemic during 2020.

We need better solutions for special needs voters rather than just providing accessibility at voter service centers. This committee and the legislature helped us get on the path to better solutions with enactment of at least three important provisions in SB548 last year, which became Act 213 when signed by the governor. The appointment of statewide and county special needs voters advisory committees is one of the solutions you helped to enact.

Working for the National Federation of the Blind I learned it is far better to be part of the solution than to just be part of the problem looking on from the sidelines. With my experience, having worked to pass the voters with disabilities assistance provisions in the federal Voting Rights Act, the accessibility requirements in the Help America Vote Act, working with many others to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act and related laws, and working with the legislature on Act 213 last year, I believe I can help the make Hawaii a national accessibility leader among the growing number of vote by mail states. That's my motivation. I will be honored to serve voters with print disabilities and other voters with special needs in our state.

My resume and responses to questions I received from Chairman Rhoads have been submitted. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this statement and respond to any other questions you may have.