



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Testimony in SUPPORT of GM709 and GM710
Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the
Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii Service Area Board
Gubernatorial Nominee, SARAH BLECHMAN,
for terms to expire 06-30-22 and 06-30-26, respectively.

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Hearing Date: 4/8/2022

Hearing Time: 1:00 p.m.

1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) **SUPPORTS** the nomination
2 and confirmation of Sarah Blechman to the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii Service
3 Area Board.

4 **Department Testimony:** The role of the Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii Service
5 Area Board is to advise, monitor, review and evaluate the provision of mental health services in
6 Hawaii County. Its membership is comprised of nine dedicated volunteers representing
7 consumers, family members, community members and providers who give their time, energy,
8 expertise and experience to improve and advocate for a system of care that provides quality
9 mental health service to the people of Hawaii. The Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii
10 Service Area Board reports County updates to the Hawaii State Council on Mental Health which
11 is administratively attached to the Department.

12 Ms. Blechman fills the mental health stakeholder/community member role on the
13 Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii Service Area Board pursuant to Chapter 34-11,
14 Hawaii Revised Statutes. Her career as a therapist, social worker and clinical behavioral health
15 specialist provides opportunities to engage with members of her community, to listen and

1 educate about various behavioral and medical health issues, and to provide support and
2 intervention in times of crisis and recovery.

3 The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred her interest in serving on a
4 community board where she may contribute her time and expertise as a volunteer by
5 addressing issues such as youth and adolescent crisis services and 'ohana resources. She
6 recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has created a serious mental health concerns,
7 especially for youth experiencing mental health crisis situations where they may benefit from
8 immediate access to crisis support services.

9 Eight years ago, Ms. Blechman moved from Florida to Hawaii for a new job. She has
10 lived and worked on Hawaii Island ever since. A unique aspect of her work as a licensed
11 therapist includes pet goats. The goats are a feature of therapeutic intervention provided by
12 her and her team.

13 As a new mother, she is committed to making Hawaii a better place for her son and
14 others.

15 The Department strongly supports the appointment of Ms. Blechman to the Mental
16 Health and Substance Abuse, Hawaii Service Area Board.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

GM-709

Submitted on: 4/7/2022 10:50:40 AM

Testimony for HTH on 4/8/2022 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anthony Florig	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I've worked on several projects with Sarah Blechman, and can attest that she will be of great service to the mental health and substance use board. Sarah is organized, ambitious, and cares about her community. She is skilled at developing and implementing creative solutions to complex problems and is a collaborative leader who leaves her co-workers feeling empowered. As a community member, I give her my full endorsement.