

April 8, 2022

To: Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
Senator Donna Morcado Kim, Vice Chair  
Senate Education Committee

From: Robert G Peters, Chair,  
Early Learning Board

Re: **GM 783 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Early Learning Board,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, Benjamin Naki III, for a term to expire 06-30-2025**

Monday, April 11, 2022, Conference Room 229, 3:00 pm.

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Dear Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim and Committee Members:

This testimony is in strong support of confirming Benjamin Naki III to continue to serve as the Head Start Provider representative on the Early Learning Board (ELB) as a nominee of the Governor.

Ben currently serves as the Vice President for Early Education Programs for PACT (Parents and Children Together). He is the senior professional in charge of the implementation and on-going oversight of Head Start and Early Head Start programs. He guides educational services and family engagement approaches in developmental programs. Ben is the Treasurer of the Head Start Association of Hawaii Board of Directors and past president of the Hawaii Coalition for Dads. He has been a member of the UCLA Mentoring initiative, in which he served as a mentor to new Head Start Directors and has also been a UCLA, Johnson & Johnson Head Start Fellow.

Ben's breadth of experience and connections within the early learning community make him an informed contributor to the work of our Board and its Systems Mapping Subcommittee. He brings a unique perspective to our work because of his effective relationships with PACT's numerous stakeholders including funding source(s), health and human services providers and community networks.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in strong support of Benjamin Naki III to serve as the Head Start Representative on the ELB with a term to expire on June 30, 2025.

Sincerely,  
Robert G. Peters, Chair  
Early Learning Board



**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**Executive Office on Early Learning**  
2759 South King Street  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96826

April 10, 2022

**TO:** The Honorable Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Coleen Momohara, Interim Director  
Executive Office on Early Learning

**SUBJECT:** **Measure:** G.M. 783 – SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE EARLY LEARNING BOARD, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, BENJAMIN NAKI III, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2025.  
**Hearing Date:** Monday, April 11, 2022  
**Time:** 3:00 p.m.  
**Location:** videoconference & Room 229

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON EARLY LEARNING'S POSITION: Support**

Aloha. I am Coleen Momohara, Interim Director of the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). EOEL supports the nomination and confirmation of Benjamin Naki III to the Early Learning Board (ELB).

EOEL is statutorily responsible for the development of the State's early childhood system that shall ensure a spectrum of high-quality development and learning opportunities for children throughout the state, from prenatal care until the time they enter kindergarten, with priority given to underserved or at-risk children.

The ELB was established as a governing board through Act 202, SLH 2017, and is responsible for directing the EOEL on how best to meet the developmental and educational needs of children, from prenatal care to entry into kindergarten; providing recommendations to EOEL on improving the quality, availability, and coordination of early learning programs; promoting collaboration across agencies and stakeholders serving young children; and appointing and evaluating the EOEL Director on an annual basis.

Benjamin Naki III is seeking appointment to the ELB for the Early Head Start/Head Start representative seat. Benjamin Naki III has extensive experience administering Federal Early Head Start and Head Start Programs and is currently the Vice President of Early Education Programs and Parents and Children Together (PACT). With his experience working with young children and administering the Federal Head Start programs, including Early Head Start, Mr. Naki satisfies the requirement of §302 L-1.6 and would be an asset as a member to the ELB.

Thank you for your consideration, and for the opportunity to testify.



**Parents And  
Children Together**  
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER MOST

**TO:** Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Mercado Kim, and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

**FROM:** Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO of Parents And Children Together (PACT)

**DATE/LOCATION:** April 11, 2022; 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 229/Video Conference

**RE: GM 783 TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BENJAMIN NAKI III FOR THE EARLY LEARNING BOARD**

**We support Benjamin Naki III, gubernatorial nominee, for the Early Learning Board.** Ben is highly qualified to continue serving as a member of the State's Early Learning Board with his vast experience working within the sector of early childhood education and currently serving as the Vice President of Early Childhood Education Programs at PACT. He service on the Early Learning Board comes after previously serving for three years on the State's Early Learning Advisory Board. He also currently serving as representative on the Native Hawaiian Education Council. His commitment to early learning is second-to-none and he brings a steadfast commitment to our communities and to the children and families of Hawaii.

Ben is an accomplished leader and has represented our State on the Head Start Association of Hawaii, currently serving as it's President, as well as on the Board of the Regional Head Start Association. He has been a mentor to new Head Start directors and continues to participate in various leadership capacities both locally and nationally. As a Head Start and Early Head Start Program Director for many years, Ben has a clear understanding of the needs of both our community and its consumers. Always a thoughtful listener, Ben is willing to hear all perspectives knowing that differing opinions often help to shape positive, collaborative and productive solutions.

Ben is well-respected and effective. He operates with honesty, humility and a sincere interest in making sure that our families, especially our keiki, have access to quality early learning opportunities. Ben elevates the community around him-- expectations are high, communication is clear and decisions are made with the utmost discernment and care. He is a grounding force-- working with integrity, an eye towards the mission and a keen sense of what is best for all constituents. Ben brings to the Early Learning Board a wealth of experience coupled with his

authentic, transparent leadership and knack for fostering collaborative, engaged communities committed to student and family success.

Founded in 1968, Parents And Children Together (PACT) is one of Hawaii's not-for-profit organizations providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 17,000 people across the state annually, PACT helps families identify, address and successfully resolve challenges through its 20 programs. Among its services are: early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of Benjamin Naki III**, please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or [rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org](mailto:rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org) if you have any questions.