



HAWAII DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER

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March 29, 2022

Dear Jackie,

Mahalo and I appreciate the great honor of being nominated by Governor David Y. Ige to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and I am responding to assist you in the consideration process as you have requested, as follows.

(1) Why do you wish to be a member of the SRC?

It is required under the Federal Rehabilitation Act that the SRC include in its composition at least one member of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and I serve as the CAP representative on the SRC.

(2) How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the State Rehabilitation Council?

As the CAP representative, my role is to provide input on the State Plan, advocating for policies, programs and services for individuals seeking competitive employment, including legislative and systemic advocacy. My role includes working in a proactive and collaborative manner with the DVR Administrator and the SRC.

(3) Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision making ability as a member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

I believe that my long years of experience in the field of working with people with disabilities and employment, including the first6 supported employment program for persons with disabilities, serving as a program specialist with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Director of Rehabilitation at Goodwill of Honolulu, Deputy Director of Hawaii Centers



for Independent Living and, now, as Senior Advocate for the Hawaii Disability Rights Center. My experience in direct service, administrative skills, program planning, fiscal management, writing annual program performance reports, knowledge of local and national resources qualifies me for this position.

(4) What do you hope to accomplish during your term of service?

I hope to help to accomplish results that will increase employment training and opportunities for eligible persons with disabilities and advocate that their rights are fully protected under Federal, State and City and County laws.

(5) Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the State Rehabilitation Council?

Three qualities that best describe me would include being assertive, focused and having a capacity for continuing without weakening. I believe these qualities help me work with the SRC in accomplishing its many goals and objectives.

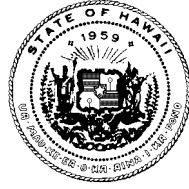
(6) Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the State Rehabilitation Council?

One previous experience would have to be my upbringing in a loving family whose parents immigrated to the United States from Europe and who valued hard work to become successful. My wife, who is from the Philippines, is still working as a housekeeper at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel – for 48 years! My experience guides me to the SRC with this in mind and has laid out my personal road map.

(7) Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the State Rehabilitation Council? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

I do not see any conflicts of interest that could arise. I am very fortunate that my Executive Director, Louis Erteschik, is an attorney and would provide me counsel to this issue. I understand that full disclosure should be indicated to avoid conflicts of interest, in particular, if there was the SRC were to vote.

DAVID Y. IGE
GOVERNOR



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

P. O. Box 339
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April 1, 2022

TO: The Honorable Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura
Senate Committee on Human Services

FROM: Cathy Betts, Director
Maureen Bates, Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

SUBJECT: **GM 786 – Relating to consideration and confirmation to the State Rehabilitation Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Howard Lesser, for a term to expire on 06-30-2025.**

HEARING: Tuesday, April 5, 2022, 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Department of Human Services, supports the nomination and confirmation of Mr. Howard Lesser to the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

Mr. Lesser seeks an appointment to the SRC as the exempt representative of the client assistance program as described by section 348-8(a)(2), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). The Client Assistance Program was established under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, to advise and inform individuals with disabilities of all the available services and benefits.

Mr. Lesser is employed at Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC). The HDRC is Hawaii's designated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System to promote the human, civil and legal rights of individuals with disabilities, as established in the constitutions and laws of the State of Hawaii and the United States, through information, outreach, education, and advocacy. Mr. Lesser advises and informs individuals with disabilities of their rights

directly connected with programs authorized under WIOA, such as the DVR. Mr. Lesser's many years of experience and dedication as an advocate for individuals with disabilities are a requirement and an asset to the SRC.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this nomination.

GM-786

Submitted on: 4/1/2022 7:08:57 PM

Testimony for HMS on 4/5/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
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 submitting this testimony in support of Howard Lesser to serve on the State Rehabilitation Council for a term to expire 06-30-25. His position on the Council represents the Client Assistance Program (CAP), which is required under the Federal Rehabilitation Act. He is highly qualified as a Senior Advocate who has had a 23 year career serving people with disabilities protecting their human, civil and legal rights, including employment.

Howard has been a strong, persistent advocate his entire career. Having served on the SRC for a long time, he has shown an ability to bring about a consensus in helping to provide input into the State Vocational Rehabilitation Plan. He has served on their Legislative Committee and has served as Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRC. His background in employment for people with disabilities extends from his 43 years of service in non-profit and state agencies to his current position.

As HDRC's Senior Advocate, Howard has worked as a tireless, passionate, and dedicated employee who is well-liked and respected by his peers. I believe that he will continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities as an SRC member.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of Howard Lesser to serve on the SRC.

As President of the Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB), I am submitting this testimony in support of Howard Lesser to serve on the State Rehabilitation Council for a term to expire 06-30-25, Representing the Client Assistance Program (CAP), required under the Federal Rehabilitation Act, in the years that I have had the pleasure in working with Mr. Lesser, he demonstrated time and time again his dedication toward serving people with disabilities protecting their human, civil and legal rights, including employment.

Mr. Lesser has been a strong, and persistent advocate, demonstrating an ability to bring about a consensus in helping to provide input into the State Vocational Rehabilitation Plan, Legislative Committee and has served as Chair and Vice-Chair of the SRC. His background in employment for people with disabilities extends from his 43 years of service in non-profit and state agencies to his current position.

As an Advocate with Hawaii Disabilities Rights Center (HDRC), Mr. Lesser works tirelessly serving the community, he is passionate about advocating for those who are unable to advocate for themselves, he is also dedicated to his work and is well-liked and respected by his peers. I believe that he will continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities as an SRC member.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of Howard Lesser to serve on the SRC.

Art Cabanilla President of Hawaii Association of the Blind