

**TESTIMONY OF  
VALERIE KATO**

**TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 606,  
Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato, for a term to expire 12-07-2026

Hearing Date: March 1, 2024, 1:00 PM

Room Number: 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss my nomination for Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). I am deeply honored to be considered for this position and am thankful to Governor Josh Green, M.D. and DOH Director Kenny Fink to have the chance to serve the State of Hawaii in this capacity. The below answers respond to the questions from the committee.

**1. A description of your experience in the field of the Department of Health, or any related field**

I come to the DOH from the Department of the Attorney General (ATG) where I represented the DOH as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division. As supervisor, I worked with twelve attorneys to provide legal services to all DOH administrations: Behavioral Health; Environmental Health; and Health Resources, as well as to the DOH's attached agencies. This representation allowed me to obtain a good background into the varied DOH programs, their goals, and areas of concern. It also gave me the opportunity to interact with many DOH staff over many programs as well as the current leadership team.

My time at ATG also included serving as First Deputy under Attorney General Holly Shikada where I managed and supervised the administrative services and human resources offices. My duties included actively drafting and reviewing department policies, handling personnel matters such as hiring and employee discipline, overseeing the budget, and developing a facilities strategic plan. This position provided sound practical experience at running a State department. In addition, working closely with the Attorney General and providing legal advice on high-priority and high-profile issues important to the State provided invaluable experience in working cooperatively with other department leaders, legislators, and the Governor.

I have been serving as the Deputy Director of Health since July 2023.

**2. An assessment of your strengths and weaknesses**

The direct administration of the First Deputy Director consists of the District Health Offices, the Office of Health Status Monitoring, and the general administrative offices consisting

of the Administrative Services Office (ASO), the Human Resources Office, the Health Information Systems Office, and the Office of Planning, Policy, and Program Development. The First Deputy works with all three DOH administrations (Behavioral Health, Environmental Health, and Health Resources) to provide administrative support and assist the general administrative offices in being the engine to help power the public health goals of our department.

My time directly working on DOH's legal matters, from reviewing DOH's contracts and providing day-to-day advice to preparing testimony on health-related legislative bills, has prepared me for the position of Deputy Director. My legal background has helped in finding ways to streamline the procurement process, enabling programs to more effectively contract for services and goods. In addition, the trust established through my work with DOH programs during the pandemic and the deputies that provide them legal advice gives me insight into the pain points and bottlenecks of processes for which I am eager to develop and implement creative solutions. My ability to collaborate and bring people together is a strength that will help to forge a more efficient and less silo-ed administration that moves forward together, supporting each other.

My weakness is my lack of a public health background when I started working for the DOH. It has been a very steep learning curve. But, the management team as well as the program subject matter experts have provided me insight into the complex policies the DOH helps to shape for the State of Hawaii. These include the intersection of the social determinants of health, health equity, and the intricate balance between federal and state regulation. I am constantly learning something new and I appreciate all the support from Dr. Fink and the three subject matter Deputy Directors, the District Health Officers, as well as staff in all areas of the department who are quick to answer my questions and provide valuable and insightful advice.

**3. An assessment of the department's strengths and weaknesses. Please include an explanation of how the department's strengths may be best utilized, as well as how the department's weaknesses may be improved.**

The department's strength is in its employees. DOH employees are dedicated and hard-working. Many have been with the department for their entire career, promoting public health and leaving a lasting impression through the services our programs provide to our local communities. Their expertise is unparalleled and additional effort could be spent towards cross-training within and across programs to grow our workforce's professional development and enable programs to retain hard-won knowledge as employees naturally transition out of the department.

In recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to find qualified successors to fill vacant positions as staff transition out of the department, resulting in a department-wide vacancy rate of 26%. The high vacancy rate has imposed a high burden on our staff who are constantly asked to do more with less. Director Fink and I are committed to reducing vacancies by examining staff job satisfaction, seeking workforce development partnerships with local universities and community colleges, creating pilot projects to speed the hiring timeline, and creating innovative ways to engage the community and plant the seeds for tomorrow's public

health workers. While competitive salaries are important, we have learned that in order to retain and attract employees, DOH needs to have a readily understandable and progressive career path for each class of work within DOH, a healthy and safe work environment with a good work-life balance, and the tools for employees to do their job with the knowledge that they are supported by the department. We have already taken steps to implement change. With federal funding from the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG), we established a PHIG Workforce Director position and filled it three months ago. The Workforce Director will be assembling a team to help the DOH form a recruitment and retention program to address the department's vacancy issues which has, over time, trickled down to create other problems such as unavoidable slower response times or increased errors due to staff being stretched thin.

**4. An overall vision for the department, specifically what goals can be accomplished within the next four years and what types of annual benchmarks can be used to evaluate the department's progress towards these goals**

The mission of the DOH is to promote and protect the physical, psychological, and environmental health of the people of Hawaii through assessment, policy development, and assurance. Our vision is that all Hawaii residents have a fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Within my administration, my goals are to:

- a. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the DOH's internal procurement processes to enable programs to timely procure goods and services.

This will be accomplished through a comprehensive review of past piecemeal policies and the creation of standard policies and procedures which update and streamline processes. For example, in the past several months, I have been working with the ASO to take a new look at procedures. This has resulted, among other things, elimination of an unnecessary and outdated procurement form causing delay in executing contracts, reduced and consolidated paperwork for small purchase procurements, and elimination of the "telephone" system of resolving Hawaii Information Portal (HIP) problems where a program that knows the details of the issue must converse with ETS through an ASO intermediary. We are currently examining policies to eliminate unproductive and duplicative steps in the reorganization process, the travel approval process, and other areas which have been "pain points" to programs and to the administrative staff.

Ultimately, I would like to create standard administrative procedures that are evenly and fairly enforced, which are easily accessible in one place and which we provide training on. The end result is to ensure that all DOH procurements are completed on-time and providers/vendors are paid promptly without delay.

- b. Improve our service to the public.

As a government department, DOH serves the public. The Office of Health Status Monitoring which handles vital records requests, such as birth certificates and death certificates,

falls under the administration of the First Deputy Director. This office issues between 120,000-150,000 certificates each year and handles many thousands of requests regarding apostilles, corrections to records, and other unusual requests requiring genealogical research. After the Maui Wildfires, staff on Oahu flew to Maui to assist Maui residents with obtaining copies of vital records.

In November 2023, the first permanent State Registrar in the last several years was onboarded and continued our policy of improved customer service by reopening the issuance office to the public from three days a week to five days a week. Fulfillment times have also shortened and gradual improvements to increase efficiency and accountability are being implemented.

c. Plan for the future of Kinau Hale.

Kinau Hale, the main office of the DOH, is located at 1250 Punchbowl and is over 60 years old and in a dilapidated and unsalvageable condition. Ongoing and escalating issues of leaks which contribute to increasingly frequent disturbances of asbestos and the overall poor condition of the building renders renovation uneconomical. Although ambient air testing confirms that the air in the building is currently safe, a major incident or further progression of Kinau Hale's deterioration could result in building failure. As a result, it is necessary to start planning for redevelopment of the 1250 Punchbowl parcel, potential short-term remediation, and the potential to immediately move all 400+ DOH employees housed at Kinau Hale to an alternative location. It is my commitment to the employees at Kinau Hale that this project have significant progress with a timeline within the next two years.

**5. The department's top budgetary priority for the biennium**

The department is focused on strengthening the public health infrastructure statewide and our budgetary priorities are those in the executive budget request. Some priorities include funds to meet the critical mental health needs of adults and children and supporting the mental health continuum of care with additional funds to increase oversight and safety at the Hawaii State Hospital, increasing mental health provider reimbursement, and expanding the number of transitional group homes. Another priority includes planning for redevelopment of the 1250 Punchbowl site.

**6. An assessment of the department staff's morale, including the turnover rate for personnel**

The DOH has faced numerous emergencies and challenges in recent years from responding to the COVID pandemic to the Maui Wildfires disaster. Increased responsibilities coupled with staff shortages has resulted in increasing burnout to our dedicated staff. It is a priority of the department to ensure employee wellness and a good work-life balance so that each person can thrive. Part of this goal is to reduce vacancies in order to ensure programs are properly resourced. The current department vacancy rate stands at 26% and the turnover rate for calendar year 2023 is at 11.4%. I am committed to reducing vacancies and during the first seven

months of serving as Deputy Director I have personally overseen the establishment and filling of critical positions to different offices throughout the department.

**7. Any foreseeable possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service in the department and how you would overcome them.**

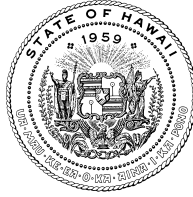
I do not foresee any possible conflicts of interest during my service in the department.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Valerie M. Kato', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Valerie M. Kato  
Deputy Director of Health



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS  
KE KE'ENA O KE KIA'ĀINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA

Testimony of  
**Josh Green, M.D.**  
Governor, State of Hawaii

Before the  
**Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

Friday, March 1, 2024  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

In consideration of  
**Governor's Message No. 606**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

I respectfully request your favorable consideration of Governor's Message No. 606, the appointment of Valerie Kato to serve as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health.

Val has served as the Deputy Director since July 27, 2023. In her role as Deputy Director, Val heads the department's administrative offices, which includes the Administrative Services Office (ASO), Health Information Systems Office (HISO), Human Resources Office (HRO), Office of Health Status Monitoring (OHSM), Office of Planning, Policy, and Program Development (OPPPD), Office of Affirmative Action (OAA) and the District Health Offices (DHOs).

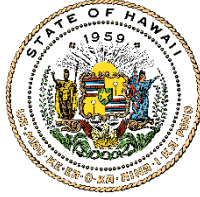
Prior to becoming Deputy Director, Val was the Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health Division and held other various roles as a Deputy Attorney General, she served as the First Deputy Attorney General for the State from 2021 through 2022 and was also an Associate Attorney at Ning Lilly & Jones for 17 years.

I am confident that with her experience, Valerie Kato will serve the State well in her role as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health.

Mahalo for your consideration.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE  
FIRST DEPUTY

DEAN D. UYENO  
ACTING DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES  
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION  
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES  
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS  
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES  
ENFORCEMENT  
ENGINEERING  
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION  
LAND  
STATE PARKS

Testimony of  
DAWN N.S. CHANG  
Chairperson

Before the Senate Committee on  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Friday, March 1, 2024  
1:00 PM

State Capitol Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

In Consideration of  
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 606  
SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION  
AS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, VALERIE KATO  
FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE DECEMBER 7, 2026

Governor's Message 606 submits for consideration and confirmation, Valerie Kato, as Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH), for a term to expire 12-07-26. **The Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) supports this nomination.**

Ms. Kato is currently serving as the Acting First Deputy Director of the Department of Health, a position she has held since July 2023. Since being on the job, she has helped to reorganize policies and procedures in DOH's Human Resources and Administrative Services divisions as part of an overall drive to address vacancies and fill critical positions at the Department. This includes hiring a federally funded Workforce Director to examine career paths and increase retention of employees. Ms. Kato is also working on planning the redevelopment of Kīna'u Hale, the department's main office, as well as addressing other facility needs. She has also increased customer service in the Vital Records Office by expanding hours and shortening fulfillment times. As this is a critical office for many members of the public, the improved service is appreciated.

Prior to serving as the Acting First Deputy at the DOH, Ms. Kato served in the Department of the Attorney General (AG) for five years quickly rising through the ranks. Her service included time in the AG's Health Division where she represented the Adult Mental Health Division, the State Hospital and Vital Records. While serving as a Supervising Deputy Attorney General in the AG's Health Division, she provided legal advice directly to the Director and Deputies of the DOH, as well as supervised deputy attorney generals providing advice to DOH.

Prior to coming to the State, Ms. Kato worked in private legal practice for seventeen years. She was an arbitrator in the Court Annex Arbitration Program and clerked for Judge Corinne Watanable. Ms. Kato brings several years of high level administrative and policy experience to DOH, including her work at the Attorney General's office and in her current position as the Acting Deputy Director, DOH.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Valerie Kato's confirmation as Deputy Director for the Department of Health.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'AINA O KA MOKU'AINA 'O HAWAII



KENNETH S. FINK, M.D., M.G.A., M.P.H.  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
P. O. Box 3378  
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378  
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM606**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.**

SEN. JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: March 1, 2024

Room Number: 225

1 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health (DOH) strongly supports the nomination of  
2 Ms. Valerie Kato for First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

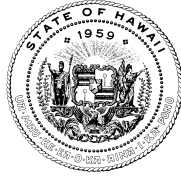
3 Prior to her current appointment, Ms. Kato supported several DOH programs as a Deputy  
4 Attorney General and subsequently as Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health  
5 Division. DOH programs found Ms. Kato to be conscientious, responsive, ethical, and detail-  
6 oriented as she guiding the department through the final phases of the COVID-19 Emergency  
7 Orders and other routine and urgent public health matters, including the emerging Red Hill  
8 Underground Storage Tank crisis.

9 On top of a firm grasp of the breadth of DOH's subject-matter programs and Hawaii Revised  
10 Statutes, Ms. Kato brings significant public sector administrative leadership experience, having  
11 previously served as First Deputy Director of the Department of the Attorney General. As the  
12 department's de facto Chief Operations Officer, Ms. Kato's has been pivotal in reducing the  
13 public's wait time for vital records, energizing public health workforce recruitment and retention  
14 efforts, driving federal compliance efforts, and organizing activities that assure the integrity of  
15 DOH's buildings and facilities, among many other critical functions. In addition, Ms. Kato's  
16 private sector experience, particularly labor and employment law, is an asset for a position which  
17 oversees human resources functions for DOH's 2,000+ employees.

18 Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Ms. Kato.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
STATE OF HAWAII  
*Ke Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina 'o  
Hawai'i*

SYLVIA J. LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR  
STATE OF HAWAII  
*Ka Hope Kia'āina o ka Moku'āina  
'o Hawai'i*



KALI WATSON  
CHAIRMAN, HHC  
*Ka Luna Ho'okele*

KATIE L. DUCATT  
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRMAN  
*Ka Hope Luna Ho'okele*

**STATE OF HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HAWAIIAN HOME LANDS**

*Ka 'Oihana 'Āina Ho'opulapula Hawai'i*

P. O. BOX 1879  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96805

TESTIMONY OF KALI WATSON, CHAIRMAN  
HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
HEARING ON MARCH 1, 2024 AT 1:00PM IN CR 225

IN SUPPORT OF

**GM 606**

for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director,  
Department of Health,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, **VALERIE KATO**,  
for a term to expire 12-07-2026

March 1, 2024

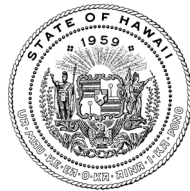
Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health (DOH).

DHHL is confident that Ms. Kato will apply an array of skills toward the position of Deputy Director of DOH. Ms. Kato's extensive experience as a Deputy Attorney General is reflected in her ability to draft and implement policies and procedures and her ability to budget administrative initiatives. Since serving as First Deputy Director of DOH, Ms. Kato supported the fiscal and administrative needs of DOH in response to the Maui Wildfires and increased customer service in the Vital Records Office. DHHL is certain Ms. Kato will be instrumental in recovery efforts for the State of Hawai'i and progress for DOH.

DHHL looks forward to working in partnership with Valerie Kato and we respectfully ask your committee to advise and consent to this nomination. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
*Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā*  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY  
LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

TO THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 606

**Friday, March 1, 2024**  
**1:00 p.m.**  
**Room 225 & Videoconference**

SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION AS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, VALERIE KATO, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 12-07-2026.

Chair Joy A. San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Henry J.C. Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support the appointment of Valerie Kato to the position of deputy director of the Department of Health. I am working with Valerie Kato in my professional capacity as Director of Finance.

Governor Green's administration shares his priorities of homelessness and housing, the cost of living, climate change, and health care for the people of Hawai'i. We are committed to take action to make the needed changes to move Hawai'i forward.

Ms. Kato is an integral part of a team that is dedicated to achieving the goals of this administration in an honest, transparent, accountable, and responsive manner.

Ms. Kato has been serving as the deputy director at the Department of Health since July 2023. Prior to that, she has experience working at the State Department of the Attorney General as supervising deputy attorney general for the health division. Her work experience will benefit the department and the State; therefore, I support her confirmation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



**TESTIMONY BY:**  
EDWIN H. SNIFFEN  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE  
  
Deputy Directors  
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele  
DREANALEE K. KALILI  
TAMMY L. LEE  
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

**STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I**  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU**  
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

March 1, 2024  
1:00 P.M.  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference  
State Capitol

In consideration of  
**Governor's Message 606**  
Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

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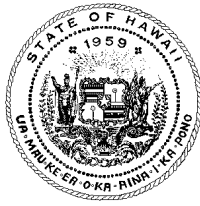
The Department of Transportation (DOT) **supports** the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato received her Juris Doctor from Georgetown University Law Center, and her bachelors from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Ms. Kato's background reflects a strong commitment to public service, she has held leadership positions within the Attorney General's Office, including Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the DOH, First Deputy Attorney General, and Deputy Attorney General for the DOH Health Division.

In her role as Supervising Deputy Attorney General for DOH, Ms. Kato developed a deep understanding of the complex challenges the department faces in serving Hawaii's residents. She is an accomplished public servant and has the right qualifications to serve as the Deputy Director for DOH.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



JORDAN LOWE  
DIRECTOR

MICHAEL VINCENT  
Deputy Director  
Administration

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT GOVERNOR  
KE KE'ENA

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

*Ka 'Oihana Ho'okō Kānāwai*

715 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

JARED K. REDULLA  
Deputy Director  
Law Enforcement

No. **2024-0047**

TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR MESSAGE NO. 606  
RELATING TO THE NOMINATION OF VALERIE KATO  
TO BE THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
By  
Jordan Lowe, Director

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Friday, March 1, 2024; 1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol Conference Room 225 & Via Videoconference

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ONLY**

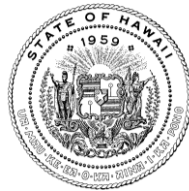
Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I submit this testimony in support of the nomination and confirmation of Valerie Kato to be the Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). Ms. Kato has decades of work experience in the private and public sector. Her strong leadership skills as the Acting Director for the Department of Health and former agencies demonstrate her abilities and dedication to the position.

Ms. Kato's vast experience in leadership and legal fields in both the private and public sector, along with her involvement in various community organizations, make her uniquely qualified to be the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 606 and Ms. Valerie Kato.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR



LUIS P. SALAVERIA  
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM  
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND  
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE  
*Ka 'Oihana Mālama Mo'ohelu a Kālā*  
P.O. BOX 150  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0150

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE  
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION  
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION  
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN TESTIMONY BY  
SABRINA NASIR  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE

TO THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 606

**Friday, March 1, 2024**  
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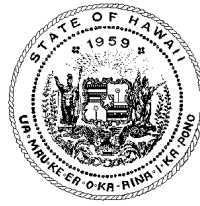
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND  
REHABILITATION**  
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima  
a Ho'oponopono Ola*  
1177 Alakea Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

TOMMY JOHNSON  
DIRECTOR

**Melanie Martin**  
Deputy Director  
Administration

**Pamela J. Sturz**  
Deputy Director  
Correctional Institutions

**Sanna Muñoz**  
Deputy Director  
Rehabilitation Services  
and  
Programs

No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR MESSAGE NO. 606  
RELATING TO THE NOMINATION OF VALERIE KATO TO BE THE FIRST DEPUTY  
DIRECTOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

By

Melanie Martin, Deputy Director for Administration

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Friday, March 1, 2024; 1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Via Video Conference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to provide testimony in support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato as the First Deputy Director for the Department of Health. Ms. Kato brings to this position a wealth of experience both in the private sector specializing in civil litigation for 17 years, and in the public sector serving as First Deputy Attorney General and Supervising Attorney General for the Health Division.

Ms. Kato "hit the ground running" upon her arrival at the Department of Health (DOH) in July 2023. Among other things, she has made a positive impact in filling DOH's vacancies, streamlining processes, and improving customer service in the Vital Records Office by expanding office hours and shortening fulfillment times. Ms. Kato is an active participant in meetings with deputy directors and other cabinet members demonstrating her commitment to serving the people of Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Governor's Message No. 606 and the confirmation of Ms. Valerie Kato.



**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I**  
**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**  
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**  
**KA 'OIHANA PILI KĀLEPA**  
335 MERCHANT STREET, ROOM 310  
P.O. BOX 541  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
Phone Number: (808) 586-2850  
Fax Number: (808) 586-2856  
cca.hawaii.gov

**NADINE Y. ANDO**  
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**DEAN I HAZAMA**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

**Testimony of**  
**NADINE Y. ANDO**  
**Director for the**  
**Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs**

**Before the**  
**Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**  
**Tuesday March 1, 2024**  
**10:50 AM**  
**Conference Room 211 & Videoconference**

**TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 606 RELATING TO**  
**GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE VALERIE KATO, DEPUTY**  
**DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the committee:

My name is Nadine Ando and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs and I support the confirmation of Valerie Kato to the position of Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato's tenure as the First Deputy Director since July 2023 has been marked by notable achievements that highlight her ability to lead and navigate complex challenges effectively. Ms. Kato has initiated and successfully implemented policies and procedures aimed at streamlining human resources, procurement, and reorganization processes. Furthermore, her commitment to human resources development is evident in her efforts to address vacancies, fill crucial positions, and establish a federally funded Workforce Director role to examine and create pathways to careers at DOH and increase retention of current employees. This initiative not only



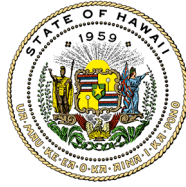
demonstrates her commitment to building a robust and capable team but also reflects her strategic vision for the future of the DOH.

Having spent 17 years in private practice as a civil litigation attorney in Hawaii, Ms. Kato brings a wealth of legal acumen and practical experience to her current position. Her prior role as First Deputy Attorney General under former Attorney General, Holly Shikada further amplifies her ability to manage administrative services, human resources, and provide critical input on high-priority state matters.

In conclusion, Valerie Kato's extensive experience, demonstrated leadership, and notable accomplishments make her an ideal candidate for the position of First Deputy Director. I support her confirmation and believe that her continued contributions will significantly benefit the Department of Health and our community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

**JOSH GREEN**  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



**KENNETH S. HARA**  
MAJOR GENERAL  
ADJUTANT GENERAL  
KA 'AKUKANA KENELALA

**STEPHEN F. LOGAN**  
BRIGADIER GENERAL  
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL  
KA HOPE 'AKUKANA KENELALA

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
**KA 'OIHANA PILI KAUA**  
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL  
3949 DIAMOND HEAD ROAD  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816-4495

TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 606,  
RELATING TO GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE VALERIE KATO

PRESENTATION TO  
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

BY  
BRIGADIER GENERAL STEPHEN F. LOGAN  
DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL

FEBRUARY 27, 2024

Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

I am Brigadier General Stephen Logan, Deputy Adjutant General, Department of Defense, State of Hawaii. I respectfully submit testimony in **SUPPORT of GM606**, relating to the Gubernatorial Nomination of Ms. Valerie Kato as Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH).

As a fellow deputy cabinet member throughout the Maui fires, Ms. Kato has demonstrated leadership and partnership in working with local communities and helping the Lahaina wildfire survivors receive continued healthcare through the development of the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center. She has been a reliable teammate and I believe she will continue to serve the people of Hawaii with integrity and thoughtfulness.

Ms. Kato's accomplishments as a public servant complement her extensive experience in the healthcare sector that includes service as the First Deputy Attorney General, Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Services Division, and nearly two decades of practicing law as an attorney within the State of Hawaii.

I would be honored to continue to serve with Ms. Kato. Her track record and results at the most senior levels speak for themselves, and I am confident she will be a pillar to help guide and lead our state into the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and for your consideration.

BG Stephen F. Logan: [stephen.f.logan@hawaii.gov](mailto:stephen.f.logan@hawaii.gov); 808-672-1003.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**MORRIS M. ATTA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF SHARON HURD**  
**CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024**  
**1:00 PM**  
**CONFERENCE ROOM 225 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**GOVERNORS MESSAGE NO. 606**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.

Chairperson San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

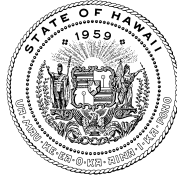
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH). Valerie's public service includes two years as the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) in the Commerce and Economic Development Division where she represented the Department of Agriculture Resource Management, Animal Industry and Agricultural Loan Divisions. She is remembered as an effective, efficient, and timely DAG by HDOA staff, and continues to serve to the present day as the First Deputy Director at the DOH.

Respectfully requesting your vote to confirm Valerie Kato to serve as the Deputy Director of DOH. She is qualified, well-respected and the right person for the position.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



KEITH A. REGAN  
COMPTROLLER  
KA LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ  
  
MEOH-LENG SILLIMAN  
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES | KA 'OIHANA LOIHELU A LAWELAWE LAULĀ**  
P.O. BOX 119, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0119

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF  
MEOH-LENG SILLIMAN, DEPUTY COMPTROLLER  
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES  
TO THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 606  
Wednesday, March 1, 2024, 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225

SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION AS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, VALERIE KATO, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE  
12-07-2026.

Honorable Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

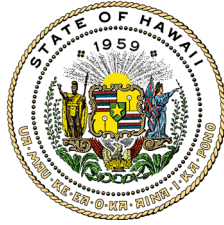
Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support for the confirmation of  
Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato has been serving as the Deputy Director for administration since July 2023,  
where she manages the District Health Offices, the Office of Health Status Monitoring, and the  
general administrative offices consisting of the Administrative Services Office, the Human  
Resources Office, the Health Information Systems Office, and the Office of Planning, Policy, and  
Program Development.

Ms. Kato's prior employment at the State Attorney General Office included supervision  
in major management functional areas. This provided her the experience in state  
administrative policies and procedures as well as administrative staff services and controls, all  
of which are major areas under the deputy for administration in DOH. I have interacted with  
Ms. Kato in her current capacity and found her to be thorough and thoughtful in her approach.

With demonstrated managerial and supervisory experience in administrative affairs, Ms.  
Kato will be an invaluable asset and can contribute greatly to the administration of a  
department responsible for critical functional areas that include health resources,  
environmental health and behavioral health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support and I respectfully ask  
your committee to advise and consent to this nomination.



**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII

**KENNETH FINK, MD, MGA, MPH**  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

**STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE ON AGING**  
NO. 1 CAPITOL DISTRICT  
250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

**CAROLINE CADIRAO**  
DIRECTOR  
Executive Office on Aging

Telephone  
(808) 586-0100

Fax  
(808) 586-0185

**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM606  
Consideration and Confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health,  
Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato**

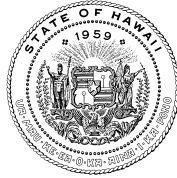
SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR  
SENATOR HENRY J.C. AQUINO, VICE CHAIR  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao  
Director, Executive Office on Aging  
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing: Friday, March 1, 2024, 1:00 P.M., Conference Room 225

- 1 **EOA Position:** The Executive Office on Aging (EOA), an attached agency to the Department of
- 2 Health (DOH), is in **strong support** of the nomination of Valerie Kato, as the Deputy Director for
- 3 the Department of Health, for a term to expire 12-7-26.
- 4 **Recommendation:** Valerie Kato is an asset to the DOH leadership. She has a “can do” attitude
- 5 and has demonstrated her willingness to help and support. In her short time with DOH, she has
- 6 assisted the Executive Office on Aging on personnel matters. We hope you find in favor of her
- 7 confirmation.
- 8 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



KEITH A. REGAN  
COMPTROLLER  
KA LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ  
  
MEOH-LENG SILLIMAN  
DEPUTY COMPTROLLER  
KA HOPE LUNA HO'OMALU HANA LAULĀ

**STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES | KA 'OIHANA LOIHELU A LAWELAWE LAULĀ**  
P.O. BOX 119, HONOLULU, HAWAII 96810-0119

WRITTEN TESTIMONY  
OF  
KEITH A. REGAN, COMPTROLLER  
DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING AND GENERAL SERVICES  
TO THE

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024, 1:00 P.M.  
CONFERENCE ROOM 225 AND VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE, STATE CAPITOL

G.M. 606  
SUBMITTING FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION AS THE  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, GUBERNATORIAL  
NOMINEE, VALERIE KATO, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 12-07-2026.

Honorable Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services, I am providing testimony in **support** of GM606, the consideration and confirmation of Valerie Kato as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

I have had the opportunity to work with Ms. Kato since she was appointed by Governor Green to serve as the First Deputy for the DOH. Her background, serving as the First Deputy Attorney General, where she oversaw the administrative functions of the department, has provided her with a solid foundation to manage similar functions within the DOH. In addition, she has worked closely with the DOH and has been able to develop

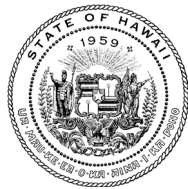
a broad understanding of the DOH's diverse responsibilities while serving as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division. Ms. Kato's lengthy career, as an attorney in private practice, more specifically as a civil litigation attorney, will also serve the DOH well as her experience will help guide the department as they navigate complex and challenging policy issues.

Since Ms. Kato has been on the job as acting First Deputy, she has worked tirelessly in supporting the DOH's response to the Maui Wildfires tragedy. Her experience helped the department quickly develop and implement actions that allowed the department to provide necessary assistance through critical contracts for services, the movement of personnel into the disaster area, and the delivery of vital records, at no cost, to impacted residents. While the Maui Wildfire response has consumed much of her available time, she still has pushed forward on key departmental initiatives to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of human resources, procurement, and planning related to meeting the space needs of the department.

It is for these reasons that I believe Ms. Kato has proven to be an excellent candidate to serve in the role of First Deputy for the Department of Health. I humbly request your support of her appointment.

JOSH GREEN M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR



GARY S. SUGANUMA  
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION**

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau  
P.O. BOX 259

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540  
FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

**TESTIMONY OF  
KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

**TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

G.M. 606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026

**BEFORE THE:**

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**DATE:** Friday, March 1, 2024  
**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato previously served as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health Division, First Deputy Attorney General under Attorney General Holly Shikada, and spent 17 years in private practice. During Ms. Kato's time at the Department of the Attorney General, she provided legal advice to executive departments, including DOH, and supervised administrative services and human resources with the Department of the Attorney General.

Since July 2023, Ms. Kato has served as First Deputy Director of DOH, where she has managed the District Health Offices, Administrative Services Office, and other program offices, supported the fiscal and administrative needs of DOH in response to the Maui Wildfires, and led DOH's budget preparation and execution.

I am confident that Ms. Kato has the knowledge, experience, and leadership skills to serve as First Deputy Director of DOH. I therefore urge the Committee to confirm Ms. Kato's appointment. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 606.



**JOSH GREEN M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION**

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau  
P.O. BOX 259

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540  
FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

**GARY S. SUGANUMA**  
DIRECTOR

**KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**TESTIMONY OF  
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

**TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

In consideration of G.M. No. 606

Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health, Gubernatorial nominee, Valerie Kato

**BEFORE THE:**

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

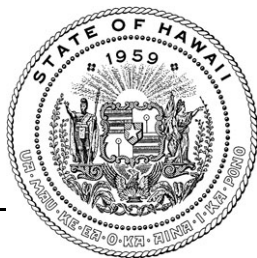
**DATE:** Friday, March 1, 2024  
**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of the confirmation of Ms. Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

I believe Ms. Kato's prior experience as a government lawyer, and especially her past role as DOH's legal counsel, has enabled her to successfully transition into her Deputy Director role. I have also had the pleasure of working with Ms. Kato when we were deputies at the Attorney General's Office and I can attest that she is extremely bright, hardworking, and has always demonstrated the highest integrity. I am confident that Ms. Kato will continue to be a great asset to DOH and to the State if permitted the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 606.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**  
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI  
A HO'OMĀKA'IKĀ'I

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR

JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA  
DIRECTOR

DANE K. WICKER  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

No. 1 Capitol District Building, 250 South Hotel Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804  
Web site: dbedt.hawaii.gov

Telephone: (808) 586-2355  
Fax: (808) 586-2377

Testimony of  
**JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA**  
**Director**  
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism  
before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Friday, March 1, 2024  
1:00 PM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

In consideration of  
**GM 606**  
**Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director,**  
**Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO,**  
**for a term to expire 12-07-2026.**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee.

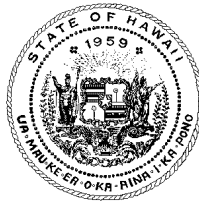
I support the appointment of Valerie Kato to serve as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato has extensive experience in both the private and public sectors. She has been the First Deputy Director since July 2023, overseeing a number of offices, and serves as the Acting Director in the absence of the Director. Since serving as First Deputy Director, Ms. Kato has provided fiscal and administrative support in response to the Maui wildfires, created efficiencies through policies and procedures – including expediting the processing of death certificates, and created career pathways at DOH to address vacancies and increase the retention of current employees, among other accomplishments.

Ms. Kato brings a diverse background with senior positions held within the State of Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General where she was the Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health Division and prior to that, the First Deputy Attorney General. Her experience in employment and labor law, as well as many other areas, will continue to be an asset in her role.

I respectfully ask for Ms. Kato's confirmation as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



**TOMMY JOHNSON**  
DIRECTOR

**Melanie Martin**  
Deputy Director  
Administration

**Pamela J. Sturz**  
Deputy Director  
Correctional Institutions

**Sanna Muñoz**  
Deputy Director  
Rehabilitation Services  
and  
Programs

STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
AND REHABILITATION**  
*Ka 'Oihana Ho'omalua Kalaima  
a Ho'oponopono Ola*  
1177 Alakea Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

No. \_\_\_\_\_

TESTIMONY ON GOVERNOR MESSAGE NO. 606  
RELATING TO THE NOMINATION OF VALERIE M. KATO  
TO BE THE FIRST DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
By  
Tommy Johnson, Director

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Friday, March 1, 2024; 1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Via Video Conference

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

I submit testimony in very strong support of the nomination and confirmation of Valeria M. Kato as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health for a term to expire on December 7, 2026. Ms. Kato has a diverse and wide-reaching work background in both the private and government sectors.

Ms. Kato's vast work experience as a private attorney, deputy attorney general, supervising deputy attorney general, first deputy director for the Department of the Attorney General, and since July 2023 as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health make her the ideal candidate.

She clearly possesses the prerequisite knowledge, honed leadership and managerial skills, and interpersonal skills required for such a complex and far-reaching position.

I strongly urge the committee to recommend advice and consent for this highly qualified nominee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in very strong support of the Governor's Message No. 606 and Ms. Kato.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY  
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS  
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHAHA

March 1, 2024

To: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair, and  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Date: Friday, March 1, 2024

Time: 1:00 p.m.

Place: Conference Room 225 & Videoconference, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

**Re: G.M. 606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.**

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations **strongly supports** the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director to the Department of Health (DOH).

Ms. Kato earned her Juris Doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center and has been an attorney since 2000 serving the public and private sectors specializing in labor and employment litigation. Her experience and wisdom as First Deputy Attorney General and Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the health division is an excellent fit to her current role.

Since her appointment as First Deputy Director to the Department of Health on July 17, 2023, Ms. Kato's oversight of the DOH Administrative Offices has been phenomenal in fulfilling the department's core mission to protect and improve the health and environment for all people in Hawaii. The DLIR is pleased with her selection and seeks your favorable approval.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 606.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 10:32:45 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Anne Lopez	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I write in support of Valerie Kato's confirmation in my personal capacity. I have known Valerie for 20 years as a colleague, peer, client, and friend. While I was the General Counsel for Hawaii Health Systems Corporation, a public body corporate and agency of the State, the Department of the Attorney General worked collaboratively with me. In her roles as a Supervising Deputy Attorney General (SDAG) and First Deputy, Valerie created a cultural of cooperation and excellence that HHSC benefited from. As the SDAG for the Department of Health, Valerie has developed a deep knowledge of all aspects of the work and mission of the DOH. She is a proven leader, administrator, thought partner, and dedicated public servant. I fully support Valerie's appointment and urge the committee to confirm her appointment. Anne Lopez

***KAREN L. SHISHIDO***  
***31 COELHO WAY***  
***HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817***

February 26, 2024

Honorable Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
Aquino, and to the Committee on Health & Human Services:

Governor's Message No. 606

I am honored to testify on behalf of Valerie M. Kato on her nomination to serve as the **First Deputy Director in the State Department of Health** under an executive appointment of Governor Josh Green. It is even more of an honor that I, as an ordinary civil servant, am allowed to testify in this free country as part of my civil right.

As you review Ms. Kato's resume, there seems to be no one near with her impressive credentials and past positions. This can only mean that Ms. Kato is truly a dedicated, loyal, and intelligent perfectionist. She is above all in intelligence, common sense, and passionate in all that she pursues.

I have known Ms. Kato for about 40 years and, in fact, was her roommate for about a year back in the 80s. Living together makes people get to know each other intimately and even then she was always helping and caring for others. I can only say that Ms. Kato has one fault and that is "taking too much on her plate with limited time." However, this means she is the most loyal and dedicated individual to her job, friends, and family. I have seen her work under pressure; but always completing the task at hand with fortitude and exquisiteness.

I would be happy to testify on Ms. Kato's behalf; but am terrified to appear before such an Honorable Legislative Committee.

Respectfully,  


Karen L. Shishido

[Karenlani8@gmail.com](mailto:Karenlani8@gmail.com)  
(808) 551-7868

**Joseph H. Campos II, Ph.D.**

**March 1, 2024, at 1:00 pm**  
**Conference Room 225**

**Senate Committee on Health and Human Services**

To: The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

From: Joseph Campos II

Re: **Testimony in Strong Support**  
**GM606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director,**  
**Department of Health, VALERIE KATO**

I am Joseph H. Campos II, and I am writing in my personal capacity. My assessment and testimony are informed by my position as Deputy Director of the Department of Human Services (DHS). I am writing this letter in **Strong Support** of the nomination and confirmation of Valerie Kato, Deputy Director of Health (DOH).

Deputy Director Kato's background and extensive experience qualify her for appointment and confirmation as the DOH First Deputy Director. Ms. Kato has consistently demonstrated that she has the leadership and experience to serve as the First Deputy Director, especially in times of crisis. Ms. Kato served in various public and private positions that will enhance her insight and thoughtfulness around matters before her at DOH.

As the Deputy Director of DHS, I had the opportunity to work closely with Ms. Kato since July 2023, in her current position, and I have seen her commitment to the people of Hawaii and have been impressed with her willingness to work with other departments and ensure that issues are addressed to facilitate the timely response to issues before departments. Ms. Kato has always shown herself to be responsive and willing to guide departments through a variety of issues of health and wellness. Ms. Kato is deeply committed to making Hawaii a better place.

During her tenure as First Deputy Attorney General in 2021, I saw her commitment to open communication and understanding of the community's needs to find ways to improve opportunities in the State during an extremely uncertain and difficult time. Ms. Kato has worked collaboratively with legislators, other executive branch agencies, and the community to deliver what is necessary to address community needs.

With her leadership and guidance, DOH will continue to be responsive to the needs of Hawaii's residents, Legislative Branch, and Executive Branch.

I **strongly support** the nomination of Ms. Kato to serve as the First Deputy Director of DOH.



**TESTIMONY OF  
JENNIFER WAIHEE-POLK**

**TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE NO. 606,  
Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of  
Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato, for a term to expire 12-07-2026

Hearing Date: March 1, 2024, 1:00 PM Room Number: 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I am currently a Deputy Attorney General with the State of Hawai'i. Prior to joining the Department of the Attorney General in March 2017, I was a Deputy Corporation Counsel with the City and County of Honolulu since September 2004.

I have known Val since 1997, when we both started attending the Georgetown University Law Center. Since that time, I have had the privilege of closely knowing Val personally, academically, and professionally. Through all these years and experiences, I have witnessed Val's leadership, effective intelligence, strong work ethic, honesty, integrity, fairness, creativity, kindness, and compassion, as well as her impressive ability to manage any job, organize any event, and resolve any problem placed before her. Val has always been willing to go above and beyond.

Throughout the last 21 years or so, I volunteered with Val during the times she served as president, as director, and as officer of Hui Makaala. I volunteered under her during the time she served as vice-president, and as advisor for the Hawaii United Okinawa Association. We also volunteered together for Hawaii Opera Theater and other nonprofit organizations. Val was always very committed to charitable and community activities and was always willing to take on and fulfill larger responsibilities. She would constantly come up with new ideas and solutions to benefit these nonprofits where needed. Val could always be trusted to run any event without fail—sometimes so well that some people would not realize how much she was actually doing.

In the last 5-6 years or so, we worked together at the Department of the Attorney General, State of Hawai'i. When joining my department, Val began in my division, Commerce and Economic Development (CED) where she was a valuable asset. As soon as she began working at CED, she immediately delved into resolving any outstanding issues the position had and assisted other deputies where needed (all while still taking care of her main clients). During the pandemic, she volunteered to work on the Covid Exemption Team for the Department of the Attorney General—this was in addition to all the work she was already doing as a Deputy Attorney General. Because of her dedication,

integrity, strong work ethic, and effective management skills, Val was often sought to assist in other areas of the department. Val moved from CED to the Health Division before becoming First Deputy Attorney General and then the Supervising Deputy for the Health Division. Last year, Val moved to the State Department of Health. While I was sad for my department's loss, I'm sure this move was because the Department of Health had worked with her and realized what a valuable asset she would be for them.

Even with these impressive skills, Val manages to be respectful to everyone. I have seen her keep her cool and treat people with respect, even when they were too upset to be respectful in return. Val has never placed her ego above resolving a problem. She has always worked well with others.

Val is a natural leader not only because of her own intelligence and skill, but because she knows how to appreciate and utilize the skills of people working with her. And, once utilizing them, she credits people for their assistance and takes the time to show she appreciates them.

I know Val would be one of the best assets the Department of Health could ever have. I know she would work tirelessly to help accomplish anything the Department needs. I know the Department of Health would be very lucky to have her as its Deputy Director.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my written testimony.

March 1, 2024

**The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair**

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

**RE: GM 606 - Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.**

**HEARING: Friday, March 1, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.**

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lyndsey Garcia and I **support** GM 606, submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.

As First Deputy Director of the State of Hawaii Department of Health ("DOH"), Ms. Kato has demonstrated her leadership through managing various offices and providing direction in critical areas such as policy analysis, human resources, and budget preparation. Furthermore, her tenure at the Department of the Attorney General, where she served in various supervisory roles, underscores her ability to provide advice and counsel to government agencies, including to DOH.

Ms. Kato's legal background, highlighted by her tenure as an Associate Attorney at Ning Lilly & Jones and Dwyer Schraff Meyer Jossem & Bushnell, significantly enhances her qualifications for this position. Her experience in areas such as commercial litigation, real property law, and labor and employment law, reflects a breadth of expertise that is invaluable in navigating the complex issues faced by DOH.

Ms. Kato's proven track record of leadership, legal expertise, and knowledge and experience with DOH make her an ideal candidate for this role.

For the foregoing reasons, I support the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of DOH.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/25/2024 5:22:39 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kevin Kunisaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying for the confirmation of Valerie Kato for DOH Deputy Director.

I have known Ms. Kato for over 30 years. She is the hardest working, most reliable person I know. If she is given a task, you can guarantee that she will get the job done. Her professionalism and judgment are top notch. She has a proven record of success, and will bring a lot of experience to the State of Hawaii.

She has worked on large projects, such as the the Hawaii United Okinawa Association's (HUOA) Okinawan Festival. She is able to coordinate and manage people efficiently and effectively. She will often find details that other miss.

In summation, I feel that Ms. Kato is highly qualified for the position of Deputy Director. Thank you for your consideration.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 5:44:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michael A Lilly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have known Valerie Kato for over two decades, many years of which she worked as an attorney in my law firm, Ning, Lilly & Jones. I felt honored that the skills she learned with our office resulted in her being hired by the office of the Attorney General and later following in my footsteps by becoming First Deputy Attorney General and later as First Deputy to the Department of Health. I strongly support her nomination under GM 606.

From my personal supervision of Ms. Kato for many years I can categorically say that she is hard working, with sound judgment, and with a high degree of integrity. She has excellent people skills and worked well with all our clients. She is a team player and well liked by all who she associates with. She will reflect great credit to the State if her nomination to continue as First Deputy of the Department of Health is confirmed.

**JOSH GREEN, M.D.**  
Governor

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
Lt. Governor



**SHARON HURD**  
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

**DEXTER KISHIDA**  
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawai'i  
**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
KA 'OIHANA MAHI'AI  
1428 South King Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96814-2512  
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

**TESTIMONY OF DEXTER KISHIDA  
DEPUTY TO THE CHAIRPERSON**

**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 2024  
1:00 PM  
CONFERENCE ROOM 225 & VIDEOCONFERENCE**

**GOVERNORS MESSAGE NO. 606**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.

Chairperson San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health (DOH). Ms. Kato is a proven leader, passionately serving Hawaii through her time as Deputy Attorney General representing the Department of Agriculture, the Agribusiness Development Corporation, Department of Health and now as Deputy Director of Health.

Ms. Kato's proven leadership through the COVID-19 pandemic, along with her character and experience will be a great asset to guiding DOH, leading to a better Hawai'i.

Respectfully requesting your vote to confirm her nomination to serve as the Deputy Director of Health. She is qualified, well-respected and the right person for the position.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 10:52:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kelcie Nagata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Since Valerie began serving as the First Deputy Director in July, she has accomplished numerous things. For example, she has implemented policies and procedures to create efficiencies and reduce bottlencking in HR/ASO, procurement, and the reorganization processes. This example shows what she can accomplish in only 6 to 7 months, and proof that she will be able to accomplish much more in the next few years.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Valerie Kato for Deputy Director.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 12:01:13 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Loretta Kaeo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in support of Governor's Message 606 for Valerie Kato as Deouty Director for the State of Hawaii Department of Health. Ms. Kato is highly qualified and her experience and knowledge will be a very valuable contribution to the Department of Health.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 5:22:32 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John H W Polk	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for DOH Deputy Director.

I have known Valerie Kato for 14 years. In that time I have worked on many projects with Ms. Kato including HUOA events, weddings, and many other projects.

Ms. Kato has proven to be extremely intelligent, hard working, and caring. Her professionalism and collaboration are ideal to succeed in this position.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 5:30:43 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
JANE S LEE	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have known Valerie Kato over 15 years through the Okinawan Organization called Hui Makaala, which is a non-profit organization which raises funds for scholarships to students seeking higher education. She has served as President of this club, has been serving as a member of the Board of Directors since 2003 and helping with various committees, for the annual fashion show with the printing of the flyers and programs for many years. I strongly support Valerie Kato for the position of First Deputy director of the Department of Health. She has been serving as the First Deputy Director now since July 2023 and has vast experience and knowledge from working as First Deputy Attorney General, supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division, and Deputy Attorney General of various executive departments. I believe that Valerie Kato will continue to do a great job as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/26/2024 7:49:51 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Holly Shikada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully submit testimony in strong support of Valerie Kato to serve as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I was extremely fortunate to have Val serve as my First Deputy Attorney General during my year of serving as the Attorney General. I could not have had a better First Deputy. Not only is Val exceptionally brilliant, she is also an extraordinarily hard worker. Val possess the highest level of integrity and conducts herself with unsurpassed ethical standards.

Val's knowledge and people skills makes her a perfect match for the position of First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Val's experience handling legal matters for the Department of Health and her continued relationship with the Deputy Attorneys General within the Health Division will serve the Department of Health and the State very well. Val knows how to work with people, support them, and get them to achieve to their highest potential. At the same time, she does not shy away from holding people responsible and accountable for their work, a quality that is so important for this position.

Val has the ability to bring many people with various backgrounds together to achieve a common goal. With all of the difficult issues facing the Department of Health, this quality is exactly what the Department of Health needs at this time. Val will be able to coordinate the various entities that will need to work together to meet the needs of the State.

I can think of no better person for this position. Val has been serving in this position for a few months now and has been doing an outstanding job. Much of this is due to her experience as the former Supervisor of the Health Division within the Department of the Attorney General, along with being a quick study and putting in the necessary time and effort to learn everything she can about whatever issue is before her.

The State of Hawaii would be extremely fortunate to have Valerie Kato serve as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. It is without reservation that I strongly support the appointment of Valerie Kato as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Holly Shikada



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 7:47:42 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jo Ige	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support the nomination of Valerie Kato for the position of First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. She has demonstrated significant contribution to the Hawaii community in her current and previous positions. She has great leadership skills, a full understanding of the requirements of the position and will be a continued asset to the state of Hawaii. Her experience and knowledge is valuable in this position and I have confidence in her commitment to serving the people of Hawaii to her best ability.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 7:57:43 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Margaret Ahn	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Members of the Committee:

I wholeheartedly support the confirmation of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director of the Department of Health of the State of Hawaii. I am a former Deputy Attorney General who worked with Ms. Kato as she was promoted from Deputy Attorney General, to Supervising Deputy Attorney General, to First Deputy Attorney General. I am familiar with her expertise in managing both legal and administrative matters. Ms. Kato always performed her duties professionally, fairly, responsibly, and with integrity, all while exercising superior legal judgment. Ms. Kato's intelligence and professional temperament make her the ideal choice for the position of Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Valerie Kato.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 9:13:53 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
tracie kahoolihala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for DOH Deputy Director.

I have worked with Ms. Kato for 20 years at Ning Lilly & Jones (private law firm), and have also worked under her direction at non-profit events.

Ms. Kato has always demonstrated exceptional professionalism and works hard for our clients. I have also had the pleasure of working with her when she was the First Deputy Attorney General and proved her leadership skills. She is a strong collaborator and cares for the people of Hawaii. She is intelligent and possesses the character and skills to succeed in this position.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Testimony in **Support** of GM606:  
Submitting for Consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, **VALERIE KATO**, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.

By: Teresa L Polk, Senior Manager Engineering Operations and Program Manager, The Boeing Company, Retired.

I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for Department of Health Deputy Director.

Valerie has been a close family friend since 2011. I have seen her provide strong leadership, direction, and organization to a number of projects with many moving parts. She shows great compassion towards people as she demonstrates her terrific problem-solving skills.

I have viewed a number of projects she has led outside of her work for the State of Hawaii. As a Program Manager myself, I have been impressed with her ability to get a lot of people all going in the same direction at the same time!

I respectfully urge the Committee to unanimously endorse Valerie's nomination.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



February 26, 2024

Hawaii State Legislature  
The Thirty-Second Legislature  
Regular Session of 2024  
Hawaii State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: Governor's Message No. 606  
Consideration and Confirmation of Deputy Director Valerie M. Kato

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Senator Henry J.C. Aquino  
and Committee Members:

Please accept my letter in support of Valerie Kato for First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I worked with Val for two and a half years at the Department of the Attorney General in the Commerce and Economic Development Division (CED).

While Val was in CED, she tackled issues involving the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Agricultural Loans Division, Agriculture Resource Management Division and Animal Industry. Val would also occasionally be the Acting Supervisor for CED when the supervisor was away, taking on additional responsibilities as the supervisor.

During the COVID pandemic, Val was on the Exemption Team answering public inquiries about COVID emergency proclamations and travel restrictions/exemptions. The COVID Exemption Team consisted of a group of deputies who were assigned inquiries that were emailed to the Attorney General and the incoming inquiries were at times overwhelming in volume, but the Team was able to get the information back to public in a timely manner. This response team also worked after hours in the evenings and over the weekends.

Val is the perfect choice as Deputy Director for the Department of Health. My support is 100% with Val.

Thank you for your attention and consideration herein.

Very truly yours,

Elaine Agbayani  
Elaine Agbayani

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 2:19:42 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Eric Nitta	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

In support of the consideration and confirmation of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health (DoH).

I have known Ms. Kato personally and professionally for over 15 plus years. Without a doubt, Ms. Kato's experience and knowledge makes her a very capable and qualified candidate for this job. In addition, she is dedicated and hard-working which will be an asset to DOH.

I respectfully urge this committee to support Valerie Kato as DoH Deputy Director.

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

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
and Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair,  
and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services  
Thirty-Second State Legislature

**RE: Written testimony in support of GM 606**

Date: Friday, March 1, 2024

Time: 1:00 PM State Capitol, Room 225

Dear Senators and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I submit the following testimony in support of Gov. Msg. No. 606 for the consideration and confirmation of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health.

I have been employed for the past 37 years at the Department of the Attorney General, Commerce and Economic Development Division as a Legal Assistant. Valerie Kato joined the Department of the Attorney General, Commerce and Economic Development Division in September of 2018. Ms. Kato quickly proved to be quite an asset in the Division. She was able to tackle any assignment with ease. She always treated her fellow Deputies and staff with respect and kindness. She was always willing to provide assistance to help tackle difficult assignments. I found her to be very organized and a fountain of knowledge which she had retained from her vast previous litigation experiences. I feel very fortunate to have worked alongside her. When Covid hit, she volunteered to assist the Covid Exemption Team responding to countless public inquiries and requests for travel exemptions. She also assisted in reviewing drafts of emergency proclamations. She managed to maintain her caseload and other assignments while assisting the Covid Exemption Team.

In January of 2021, she was tapped to fill a vacancy within the Department of the Attorney General, Health Division as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General. Although having to take on a different area of law, she continued to provide assistance to the Covid Exemption Team til December 2021.

In December of 2021, she was selected to be the First Deputy Attorney General. Ms. Kato also stepped into the Acting Attorney General while the Attorney General was off island. Her capabilities seem boundless. When the present Attorney General came on board, Ms. Kato returned to the position of Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division until June of 2023.

I believe her professionalism has always remained above reproach and her abilities boundless. The Department of Health, or any other Department for that matter, would be lucky to have Ms. Kato.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Haida

February 27, 2024

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
and Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair,  
and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services  
Thirty-Second State Legislature

**Written testimony in support of GM 606**

DATE: Friday, March 1, 2024

TIME: 1:00 PM State Capitol, Room 225

Dear Senators and Members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I submit the following testimony in support of Gov. Msg. No. 606 for the consideration and confirmation of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director, Department of Health.

I worked with Valerie Kato for about three years. I found Val to be a self-motivated, creative thinker with the ability to solve any problem with ease. No task too small or large, Val was able to handle any assignment given. She always made time to assist her colleagues whenever needed.

While I was sorry to see her leave our division, I knew she would prove to be an asset wherever she landed.

Respectfully,

Elaine Go

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 4:08:57 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dave Day	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

I serve as the Special Assistant to the Attorney General, but am testifying in my individual capacity in strong support of the confirmation of Val Kato as Deputy Director of Health.

I have known Val since December 2021, when Val became First Deputy Attorney General. After I became Special Assistant in January 2023, I worked with Val when she served as Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health Division, and as Deputy Director of Health.

In my opinion, Val is incredibly smart and a wonderful public servant. Val earned my sincere respect in many different ways, but among those that stood out the most are her decisiveness, her willingness to help, her work ethic, and the quality of her decision-making. She is a natural leader, has tremendous legal knowledge, and has a wonderful sense of humor. Val believes in serving the State with the highest degree of ethics.

Val has proven to be an excellent servant of the people of Hawaii. I strongly support her confirmation.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

TESTIMONY OF DANE K. WICKER  
IN SUPPORT OF  
GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 606, SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION  
AS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE,  
VALERIE KATO, FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 12-07-2026.

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee.

I am writing for your consideration and confirmation of Ms. Valerie Kato for the position of First Deputy Director of the Hawaii Department of Health. Having had the privilege of working with Valerie for the past year, I can attest to her exemplary professionalism, dedication, and remarkable leadership abilities.

Valerie brings with her a wealth of experience and knowledge, particularly in the realms of law and administration. Currently serving as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health since July 2023, Valerie has adeptly managed various facets of the department, including the District Health Offices, the Office of Health Status Monitoring, and several crucial administrative offices. Her tenure as the First Deputy Attorney General under Attorney General Holly Shikada provided her with invaluable insights into managing administrative services and human resources, as well as offering counsel on high-priority and sensitive State matters. Additionally, her role as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division underscores her deep understanding of legal issues across multiple areas of administration.

Since assuming the role of First Deputy Director, Valerie has demonstrated exceptional leadership in navigating complex challenges and driving positive change within the department. Notably, she played a pivotal role in responding to the Maui Wildfires by swiftly addressing fiscal and administrative needs, streamlining processes, and ensuring seamless operations despite challenging circumstances. Her proactive approach to implementing policies and procedures has resulted in increased efficiencies and improved services across various departments. Valerie's commitment to addressing vacancies and enhancing workforce development initiatives underscores her dedication to fostering a thriving and resilient workforce within the department.

Furthermore, Valerie's efforts to enhance customer service in the Vital Records Office and address facilities needs demonstrate her unwavering commitment to serving the public and advancing the department's mission.

In conclusion, Valerie Kato possesses the expertise, leadership acumen, and unwavering dedication necessary to excel in the role of First Deputy Director of the Hawaii Department of Health. I ask for your consideration in her nomination and am confident that she will continue to make invaluable contributions to the department and the community at large.

Thank you for considering Valerie for this esteemed position.

Sincerely,

Dane K. Wicker

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 5:52:26 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dale Sakata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Val Kato's legal and administrative experience, particularly advising the Department of Health, means that she is an ideal fit for the First Deputy position at DOH. I believe her work will help DOH become more efficient as well as effective. I strongly support her confirmation by the Senate.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 6:06:11 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Monica Coldwell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai,

I am writing to express my unequivocal support for Valerie Kato as the **First Deputy Director of the Department of Health**.

I have known Ms. Kato for over three decades and am most familiar with her ethics and service on various boards, Hui Makaala, Hawaii United Okinawa Association, and Read to Me International. Through Ms. Kato's service to missions that directly impact Hawai'i communities I have witnessed firsthand their exceptional leadership, deep commitment to public well-being, and innovative approach to solving challenges that impact present and future generations of Hawai'i.

Valerie Kato possesses a rare combination of strategic vision, operational expertise, commitment to excellence, and a compassionate heart which makes Ms. Kato able to create positive and sustainable change in Hawai'i. Under Ms. Kato's leadership, I am confident that our state's Department of Health will excel in its mission to protect and improve the health and environment for all people in Hawai'i. I firmly believe Ms. Kato's exemplary track record, coupled with a profound dedication to public service, will make Valerie Kato the ideal First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Me ke aloha,

Monica Coldwell



Statement of  
**Tammy Monico**

before the  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

Friday, March 1, 2024  
1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225

in consideration of  
**GM 606**

**Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director of the  
Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee,  
VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire on 12-07-2026.**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee.

I **support** the appointment of **Valerie Kato** to serve as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Having had the privilege of knowing Ms. Kato for many years, both professionally and personally, I can attest to her outstanding qualities and remarkable character.

As a coworker at the law firm Ning, Lilly & Jones from 2003-2018, I have witnessed her intelligence, exceptional problem-solving skills, and commitment to achieving fair resolutions as an attorney. She has since held respected positions for the State of Hawaii including the First Deputy Attorney General and Supervising Deputy Attorney General, Health Division, and is currently serving as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Ms. Kato has given her time and talents to serve the community. Her tireless volunteer work with various organizations has inspired me to also be a volunteer.

I have great confidence in Ms. Kato's ability to continue serving as Deputy Director of the Department Health for the State of Hawaii and wholeheartedly endorse her for this position.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/27/2024 7:13:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Al Kakazu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

1. have known Valerie Kato for over 20 years. Mainly as active members of cultural and community organizations. She has always been a go-getter. Val thrives on leadership positions and strives to make a difference with her efforts. I respect Val for her high intelligence and boundless enthusiasm. However, I especially value Val's golden heart and genuine care for people and the organizations she represents. While also considering her extensive professional experience and proven track record in her career, I wholeheartedly support Val's appointment as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Aloha,

Al Kakazu

February 27, 2024

Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
Sen. Henry J. C. Aquino, Vice Chair

Re: GM 606 Relating to consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, gubernatorial nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-7-2026

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and Member of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am a resident of the State of Hawaii. I am a registered voter.

I fully support confirmation of Governor Green's appointment of Valerie M. Kato as First Deputy of the Department of Health of the State of Hawaii.

I became familiar with Ms. Kato when she was working as a private practice attorney. Based upon my interactions with Ms. Kato and for the reasons described herein, I believe Ms. Kato is an excellent choice for the appointed position of First Deputy of the Department of Health of the State of Hawaii.

As evidenced by her educational background and professional experience, Ms. Kato is clearly well educated and intelligent. Ms. Kato is also knowledgeable on a wide range of legal topics and recognizes legal issues. Ms. Kato took practical, reasonable, and fair approaches to resolving legal issues.

Ms. Kato diligently and zealously represented her clients, without compromising her integrity, regardless of the less than appropriate behavior of opposing counsel. Unlike some attorneys, Ms. Kato always adhered to the highest ethical standards.

The public will find Ms. Kato to be polite, humble, and approachable.

I believe these qualities make Ms. Kato an excellent leader. She will be an outstanding administrator and supervisor of the Department of Health. The State of Hawaii will benefit from Ms. Kato's abilities and leadership as the First Deputy of the Department of Health. I highly support confirmation of Governor Green's selection of Ms. Kato for the position of First Deputy of the Department of Health of the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for allowing me to testify regarding Governor's Message 606.

/s/ Allison Yee

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 3:19:50 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ryan Okunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee,

My name is Ryan Okunaga and my wife Shinobu and I wholeheartedly support Valerie Kato for confirmation as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

i have had the pleasure of knowing Valerie for over 17 years and have also had the opportunity to work with her many times on multiple events within the Hawaii community. My wife has known Valerie for over 12 years.

Valerie has always taken a leadership role in volunteer events and organizations, including the Hawaii United Okinawan Association, Hui Makaala of Hawaii, and the Hawai'i Opera Theater.

Valerie has received awards from the United Japanese Society and Hui Makaala, among others.

Valerie has proven to be a valuable asset in these volunteer organizations and can be relied upon to ensure successful events.

Even in her personal life, Valerie will often be the leader and organizer. She has volunteer coordinated weddings and other milestone events for many friends and family.

Valerie does all while having a successful career in the Hawaii legal community.

The Department of Health will be well served with the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy director.

Sincerely,

Ryan and Shinobu Okunaga

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 8:06:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Matthew J. Shim	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 8:13:57 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Ke-ching ning	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Ke-ching Ning. For many years, I was the managing partner at Ning Lilly & Jones, a commercial litigation firm in Honolulu. Ms. Kato was a valued and trusted associate at the firm. Well beyond her ability as an attorney, she was well liked and respected by both the lawyers and staff, had a good temperament to negotiate sometimes difficult or controversial situations; she was prudent and careful, and became a younger but mature member of our team. Now she is, rightly, far beyond where she was. She is entirely suited to a managerial and leadership position.

## TESTIMONY OF GARY H. YAMASHIROYA

### TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

GM 606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026.

### BEFORE THE:

Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**DATE:** Friday, March 1, 2024

**TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 225

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee,

This testimony is submitted in **strong support** of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director, Department of Health.

Val was the First Deputy Attorney General when I was the Special Assistant to the Attorney General in the Department of the Attorney General (“ATG”). My office was directly across from hers and I was able to daily observe first-hand her intelligence, conscientiousness, and work-ethic.

As the First Deputy of ATG, Val managed and supervised the administrative services and human resources offices and provided input on high-priority and sensitive State matters. Her ability to adeptly navigate the variety of administrative matters within ATG allowed it to provide the highest level of service to its executive and legislative clients. Her vast experience as an attorney in the private and public sectors, as evidenced by her resume, allows her to critically assess a wide variety of challenging situations, identify key issues and find solutions in addressing them. She did not shy away from taking things head-on, particularly problems that were complex and urgent.

Throughout her time at ATG, Val displayed both integrity and authenticity in her work, beginning from her time as a Deputy Attorney General representing the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Agriculture and various other executive departments, as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division, advising DOH on legal issues in all areas of administration: General, Behavioral Health, Environmental Health, and Health Resources, and as the First Deputy Attorney General. Val was a guardian of fiscal responsibility within ATG and modified policies to ensure that ATG funding was used responsibly and judiciously. She also genuinely cared about ATG employees, and there is no doubt she does so for DOH employees.

Testimony of Gary H. Yamashiroya

GM 606

March 1, 2024

Page 2 of 2

She always found ways to improve morale and support workers. On the other side, she did not hesitate to hold unproductive or problem employees accountable.

Her commitment to public service is evidenced by her contributions to the betterment of DOH as its First Deputy Director. She continues to show genuine concern and care in the response to the Maui Wildfires, including expediting contracting, managing travel issues for the department, overseeing permitting for the use of the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center, and supervising the free replacement of vital records lost as a result of the wildfires to Hawaii residents. She is also proactively attacking DOH's longstanding issues such as impediments in the Human Resources Division and Administrative Service Office, procurement, and reorganization processes, key vacancies, and customer service improvements, particularly in the Vital Records Office. I truly believe she will continue to move DOH forward in a beneficial way.

For the above reasons, I strongly support the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director for the Hawai'i Department of Health. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:29:33 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dr. Christine Miyasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of confirming Ms. Valerie Kato for Hawaii Deputy Director of the Department of Health. She was born and raised on Oahu, forming strong roots and a deep personal connection to the people of Hawaii. Health is a vital role in ensuring the happiness and well-being of Hawaii's people and should only be entrusted to one that is both dedicated and qualified to its successful management.

Ms. Kato has vast experience serving Hawaii's public as its current First Deputy Director of the Department of Health, former First Deputy Attorney General, former Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division, where she advised the Department of Health on legal issues, and former Deputy Attorney General, where she represented the DOH, the Department of Agriculture and various other executive departments. She is also bringing important perspective from the private sector as she worked over 15 years as a private practice attorney in Hawaii.

Ms. Kato will serve as a valuable asset to the Department of Health and to Hawaii's people. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christine Miyasaki

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:44:55 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dean Matsukawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Buenaventura and Member of the Committee

I am pleased to offer strong support for Valerie Kato as Deputy Director for the Department of Health. As the former Agricultural Loan Administrator and a current 89-day hire I had the pleasure of working directly with Valerie in her prior role representing the Ag Loan Division. During her tenure with program she displayed great professionalism, dedication and a great work ethic. Her years of legal experience, character, wisdom and ability to work wiith others makes her an outstanding choice for this position.

Ms. Kato is a valuable asset to the State and will greatly benefit the Hawaii Department of Health. I respectfully ask the Committee to vote favorably on the confirmation of Valerie Kato to the post of Deputy of the Department of Health.

Mahalo,

Dean M. Matsukawa

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:59:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
James C. Paige	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director, Department of Health. As a thirty year public servant I have worked with and for many public employees and Val is one of the finest individuals I have had the pleasure of working with. Val is always professional in dealing with her co-workers and the public. She is also extremely bright and very creative in addressing complex legal and regulatory matters. I have worked directly with Val on litigation and regulatory matters and have always found her to be diligent, efficient, and highly ethical. Val is an inspired leader and has the ability to manage employees and resources in a manner that has always been fair and in the best interest of the public and the State. On a personal level Val is a very kind person with a positive attitude and a great demeanor. She will do an excellent job as Deputy Director.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 11:03:38 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Michele Nakata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Michele Nakata and I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health. I have been an employee of the Department of Health for over 35 years and in her short time as the Acting Deputy Director, Ms. Kato has proven to be forward-thinking, an effective communicator, and creative problem-solver. These are all essential attributes of a good change manager which is a critical need for the department as it seeks to support state recovery from the many recent and diverse emergencies and strengthen Hawaii's public health infrastructure moving forward. Ms. Kato brings 20 years of vital knowledge and skills from her legal experience in private practice, as a court arbitrator, and with the Hawaii Office of the Attorney General, that will be invaluable in developing sensible, constructive, and successful solutions. Lastly, Ms. Kato's exemplifies the qualities of a leader that engages and encourages others to join her. She listens, encourages participation, adapts, and maintains an open and positive outlook.

Please confirm Ms. Valerie Kato for Deputy Director, Department of Health.

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
State Capitol  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Re: **In Support of the Nomination of Valerie Kato to the Position of First Deputy Director of the Department of Health  
GM 606  
Hearing Date/Time: March 1, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

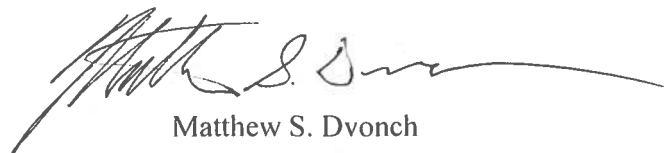
I write in strong support of the nomination of Valerie Kato to the position of First Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). I am submitting this testimony in my personal capacity.

Ms. Kato was my predecessor as First Deputy Attorney General and she and I worked together at the Department of the Attorney General for several years. In addition to her time as First Deputy Attorney General, she served as both a deputy attorney general and the supervising deputy attorney general in the Department's Health Division. She has served as DOH's First Deputy since July 2023. As a fellow deputy director, I work with her often.

In my interactions with her, I've found that Ms. Kato is hard-working, intelligent, and very committed to DOH's mission. Her time as First Deputy Attorney General and her work as First Deputy Director of Health has given her the skills necessary to be a strong leader – good judgment, attention to detail, and a passion for working with others. I have no doubt that she will continue to be a great deputy director if confirmed.

Ms. Kato is exceptionally well-qualified for this position and I urge the committee to support her nomination. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Sincerely,



Matthew S. Dvonch

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 12:12:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Curt Otaguro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino:

I would like to submit testimony in strong support of the appointment of Valerie Kato as First Deputy Director, DOH. I initially had the honor of working with Ms. Kato as State Comptroller several years ago when she was in the Attorney General's Office. Pleasant, service oriented, and professional, Ms. Kato assisted me with a few legal matters. As Deputy Director for DOH, she is already serving the State well as she was involved with the unfortunate Lahaina wildfire disaster. Expectations were extremely high and emotions on edge as we all needed to pull together and collaborate. She is a reliable employee and Dr. Fink and the DOH is blessed to have such a hard working individual as First Deputy Director. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 1:36:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Harriet Miyasaki	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support Val Kato for the Deputy Director position. She is good and generous person, hard-working and dependable. She has my utmost trust and confidence.

State of Hawaii Senate  
Committee on Health and Human Services  
Friday, March 1, 2024, 1:00 PM  
Conference Room 225

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair

**GM 606 Confirmation of Valerie Kato, Deputy Director, Department of Health**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

I strongly support the confirmation of Valerie Kato for First Deputy at the Department of Health. I have worked with Val in my capacity as Deputy Director for the Behavioral Health Administration for nearly three years: first when she was the supervising deputy for health at the Office of the Attorney General, and more recently as the First Deputy at DOH.

Val is smart, caring and hard working. She has been performing her job at DOH with the same professionalism she conducted her duties at the AGs: thoughtful yet responsive and always with concern for the staff. She has established a good rapport with the staff and partner departments and will serve our community well in this position.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Marian Tsuji



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 4:30:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kelson Paiva	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am testifying in strong support for the nomination of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I've known Ms. Kato for the past five years while at the Department of the Attorney General. During that time, I've found her to be a competent, knowledgeable, perceptive, and collaborative as an individual and as a leader. Ms. Kato's ability to handle challenging issues that are facing the Department of Health is demonstrated by her experience managing the administrative services offices, operations management, organizational management, and her previous position as a legal advisor to the Department of Health in all administrative domains. I personally can attest to her diligent work ethic and practical expertise that has made her an outstanding candidate for this role and the State would be very fortunate to have Ms. Kato help lead the Department of Health.

I urge the committee to vote in support for Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Mahalo!

**Testimony of Kathleen Ho, Deputy Director for Environmental Health, Department of Health**

**In SUPPORT of Governor's Message 606**

Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie M. Kato, for a term to expire at noon on 12-07-2026.

SENATOR SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Hearing Date: March 1, 2024

Room Number: 225

I am writing in my individual capacity in strongly support of the nomination and confirmation of Valerie M. Kato to serve as Deputy Director, Department of Health.

Ms. Kato has been serving as the DOH Deputy Director since July 2023. Ms. Kato has already demonstrated herself to be a highly productive and effective administrator. She has a distinguished public service history, including serving as the First Deputy Director for the Department of the Attorney General and as the Supervising Deputy for the Health Division. Val has been in State Government for approximately six years. She has risen through the ranks due to her hard work, commitment, and dedication to the people of Hawaii. Her experiences as a litigator and administrator demonstrate that she possesses proven leadership skills and will be a solid asset to the Department.

Therefore, I respectfully request Ms. Kato's confirmation as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 4:52:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Shari Wong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Shari Wong and I strongly support the nominee for Deputy Director, Department of Health. I had the opportunity to work with Val when she was with the Commerce and Economic Development Division in the Department of the Attorney General. I have observed Val to be thoughtful, prepared, and dedicated. Her intelligence and work ethic contribute greatly to any situation or organization with which she is involved, and I urge the Committee to recommend her for confirmation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

TESTIMONY OF SCOTT T. MURAKAMI  
BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

In consideration of GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 606

Friday, March 1, 2024

1:00PM, Conference Room 225

SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION AS THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, VALERIE KATO FOR A TERM TO  
EXPIRE 12-07-2026.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee on Health and Human Services:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify on Governor's Message 606 regarding the nomination of Valerie Kato to serve as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health. I **STRONGLY SUPPORT** her nomination.

I have the honor of serving as the Director of Workforce for the Public Health Infrastructure Grant at the State of Hawaii Department of Health. In this capacity, I report to and work directly with Ms. Kato.

Ms. Kato is open, honest, and trustworthy. She is fair and extremely supportive of our efforts that focus on employee retention and recruitment. Her extensive legal background culminating as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General, Health Division has thoroughly prepared her with the legal, technical, administrative, and subject matter experience to serve as the Deputy Director for the Department of Health.

Val is an active listener. She is comprehensive in analyzing complex challenges that face our department and works diligently and collaboratively on the implementation of viable, creative solutions. During my short tenure working with Val, I have been most impressed by her sincere, constant vigil over the well-being of the department personnel as well as her focus on the impact our department has on the overall well-being of the people of Hawaii.

I wholeheartedly support the nomination of Ms. Valerie Kato to serve as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 5:36:18 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Suzy Graham	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura,

I am writing to strongly support the nomination and confirmation of Valerie Kato to serve as Deputy Director, Department of Health. I have had the privilege of working closely with Val since she started in July 2023. Her dedication and passion motivates the staff. Val's work ethics, experience and knowledge are well suited for this position.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Valerie Kato.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 5:56:14 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Bryan Yee	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of the nomination of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). I worked closely with Ms. Kato while she was a deputy attorney general. She was intelligent, hard-working, and personable. She was also excellent at finding practical solutions within a legal framework, an important skill for a deputy director responsible for the administrative offices within a large department. As a deputy attorney general, she pursued every assignment to its successful conclusion, finding resolutions to every challenge given to her.

I later worked for her when she was the First Deputy for the Department of the Attorney General. She was open to other opinions, displayed good judgment, and was able to make the hard decisions. She combined her strong knowledge of the law with her equally strong skills as a manager. She not only made the right decisions. She made them in a way that everyone knew was fair.

Her colleagues admired her and her clients adored her. We miss the lunches she organized, the holiday gingerbread kits that she baked and we decorated and displayed, and the plastic easter eggs she stuffed and hid. She brought a positive energy and joy to our office that DOH is now lucky to have.

I strongly support her nomination.

Bryan Yee

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Friday, March 1, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference  
Hawaii State Capitol

**Personal Testimony of Deborah Kim Morikawa, Deputy Director  
Department of Health  
In SUPPORT of Governor's Message 606**

Good afternoon Chair Joy San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Henry Aquino, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services.

My name is Deborah Kim Morikawa and I stand in **STRONG SUPPORT** of the nomination of Valerie M. Kato to serve as Deputy Director of Health.

I have worked with Ms. Kato since July 2023 and feel extremely fortunate and privileged to have her as a member of our team at the Department of Health (DOH). Ms. Kato's style is collaborative and congenial. She is thoughtful, intelligent and capable. Whenever I've approached her with any issue she always comes up with creative solutions to address some very challenging situations.

Under her leadership we have seen greater efficiency through her divisions and my administration feels heard and supported. Her office door is always open and she is willing to stop whatever she is doing to acknowledge you. She lives our Director's top priority for our department, "Caring for our Team".

I've seen her wheel around an ice cream cart to her employees, distributing frozen treats, at her own expense, to show her appreciation for them and she's the first to come up with ideas and volunteer her support for departmental projects.

Ms. Kato looks out for all of us and will take on extra work to make sure that the department is well represented. She is a committed public servant who cares about the DOH's employees, and is very mindful of her ethical and fiduciary responsibilities as the steward of public funds.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of my testimony in support of gubernatorial nominee for the Deputy Director of Health, Valerie M. Kato.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 7:39:01 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Kristin Laitila	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director, Department of Health.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 9:33:52 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alison Kato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee,

As Val’s younger sister and fellow Hawaii attorney, I am testifying in **strong support** of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for the position of Deputy Director of the Department of Health. In addition to my personal experience with Val, I have also overlapped with her in the Department of the Attorney General as a deputy attorney general.

Throughout my life, Val has been an excellent mentor and strong supporter in everything that I’ve done. She is hardworking with a strong sense of responsibility. I have seen her regularly take on additional work, obligations, and tasks where others were unwilling or unable. After entering the legal profession, I have often sought Val’s advice due to her wide breadth of knowledge and years of varied legal practice.

Val possesses many skills essential to this position and she has always been willing to take on new challenges with a positive attitude. While she takes care to handle matters properly and thoroughly, she is highly efficient and able to digest complex matters quickly. Over the years, Val has gained significant experience in planning and managing individuals and activities in a wide range of situations through her supervisory work positions, leadership roles in organizations like the Hawaii United Okinawa Association, and her involvement in planning large scale events. I’ve seen her work well with difficult people and bring out the best in others. I am always amazed by her patience, empathy, and sound judgment.

Please allow Val to continue her work with the Department of Health by confirming her as Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Alison Kato

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 9:38:06 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Brandon Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am providing this testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for the position of Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I have known Ms. Kato for many years and believe that her strong work ethic, leadership skills, and ability to create common sense solutions to complex problems will ensure she is an asset to the department and a benefit to the people of Hawaii. Thank you.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 9:55:58 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Amery Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Val Kato demonstrates exceptional professionalism , is a very conscientious worker, very organized and is able to bring a team together. I have known her for nine years and she has consistently demonstrated the traits mentioned above.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:21:24 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Gregg Kinkley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Gregg Kinkley, and I offer this testimony in strong support of Valerie Kato for the position of Deputy Director, Department of Health, State of Hawaii.

As a former Deputy Attorney General, I have known Valerie for years, and have always known her to be intelligent, diligent, creative, honest, and hard working. The spirit of public service is observably strong in her, and this unswerving commitment and dedication to the people of Hawaii, coupled with her hard-won expertise and indefatigable work ethic, make her a very valuable asset to this State, and particularly for the Department of Health, as it is beset with many current challenges. Valerie works collaboratively with others, never losing sight of the ultimate goal. A positive mental attitude, good will, and sense of mission make her a meaningful component of this State's administration.

I support this appointment without reservation.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:22:54 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jenna Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the confirmation of Valerie Kato as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. She has a long history of community service through her nonprofit work with Hui Makaala of Hawaii, Read to Me International, and the Hawaii United Okinawa Association, as well as her past pro bono work as an attorney. Confirming her as Deputy Director would continue her work for the betterment of our local communities. Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony of support.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/28/2024 10:33:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karen Kato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and members of the Committee:

I submit this testimony in **strong support** of the confirmation of my daughter, Valerie Kato, as Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Throughout her life, I have witnessed Valerie's strong work ethic and her desire to always put forth her best efforts in whatever she undertakes, be it in her education, professional life, or leisure activities.

I am extremely proud of the person that she is today: sincere, intelligent, responsible, hardworking, respectful, fair, and always striving to do her best to help others.

With her integrity, skill set, professionalism, strong leadership abilities, and caring attitude, she will be a tremendous asset to the Department of Health and the people of the State of Hawaii.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit this testimony in support of Valerie.

February 28, 2024

Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
and Senate Committee on Health and Human Services Members  
State Capitol, Room 225  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: GM606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director,  
Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to  
expire 12-07-2026.  
Hearing: March 1, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Health and Human  
Services Committee:

My name is Christopher Leong and I submit this testimony in **strong support** of the confirmation of Valerie (Val) Kato as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I am a licensed Hawai'i attorney and am currently employed by the Department of the Attorney General (AG); however, I submit this testimony in my individual capacity. I have known Val since approximately 2011 in both personal and professional contexts, so my testimony is informed by spending significant time with her in both of those spheres.

I first met and got to know Val as the elder sister of my then-law school classmate (and now attorney) Alison Kato. Through at first occasional and eventually more frequent gatherings at the Kato residence and elsewhere, I came to know Val's many talents and interests. Among them: Val is an event planner extraordinaire, a huge lover of Broadway musicals and other shows and concerts, a fierce (but fun) competitor at all sorts of board games and escape rooms, and a maker of so many delicious foods. All this on top of being an active attorney in private practice at the type of small firm where each member—even an associate like Val—really needed to pull their weight for the sake of the firm's success.

Fast forward to 2018, when I joined the AG's Commerce and Economic Development (CED) Division. I knew Val had moved to the AG about a couple months before I did; lo and behold, she was in CED as well. Val and I were now co-workers, and I finally got to see firsthand Val's many strengths as an attorney, including, but not limited to: her intelligence, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and attention to detail, but also her practicality, patience, and ability to convey legal advice in understandable terms to her clients in the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs.

Never one to say no to an opportunity to make more of an impact, Val has since also been a line deputy and the supervising deputy of the AG's Health Division and even

served in 2022 as First Deputy Attorney General under Attorney General Holly Shikada, a role where she not only gained invaluable administrative experience in overseeing one of the State's largest and most complex departments, but also addressed the highest-level legal issues facing the State. With Val's administrative experience and established familiarity with the Department of Health's legal work, it is no wonder that the latest step in her multifaceted career was to join DOH itself.

While Val is before you today seeking confirmation as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health, I note that she has already been serving in this capacity since July of 2023. Although I no longer work with Val on a daily basis, I understand she has been doing well in administering and even effecting positive change within the Department of Health. I strongly urge this Committee and the full Senate to confirm Val. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong support of GM606.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 3:59:51 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Andrew Kato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Governor's Message 606 and Valerie Kato's nomination to serve as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 11:56:24 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Katherine Velasco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am testifying in strong support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato for DOH Deputy Director for the following reasons:

I have known and worked with Valerie Kato for over 15 years at Ning, Lilly & Jones. During this time, she consistently showed exceptional professionalism and collaborated well with attorneys, staff and also the clients we dealt with. Her compassion to help others was always evident as well as her hard work and excellent character.

Thank you for your consideration of this submitted testimony.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 3:31:12 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Pamela Tamashiro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support the nomination of Valerie Kato to be appointed First Deputy of the Department of Health.

I know Ms. Kato from our membership in Hui Makaala, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving, perpetuating and sharing Okinawan culture in Hawai'i. Going on it's 53rd year in 2024, Hui Makaala has sponsored an annual Fashion Show to raise funds for scholarships for students pursuing undergraduate and post-graduate studies.

Ms. Kato has been instrumental in the success of our Fashion Shows for many years. She designs and prints the program for the Show. She is our "ace" Silent Auction organizer. She is very talented and creative, always thinking "outside the box." People are drawn to her because she is an effective consensus builder, not to mention that she is also very "book smart!" Whatever task Ms. Kato undertakes, she does so excellently!

Ms. Kato is a tremendous asset to Hui Makaala! We are so fortunate to have her as a member! Likewise, she will bring all her energy and talent as the DOH First Deputy. Accordingly, I wholeheartedly support Ms. Kato's nomination and, without any reservations, encourage the Committee to approve her nomination.

February 29, 2024

Re: GM 606; Hearing on March 1, 2024 at 1:00 p.m.  
Confirmation of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director of the Department of Health; Testimony in Support

To Senator San Buenaventura and Committee Members:

I submit my written testimony in strong SUPPORT of the nomination of Valerie Kato to be the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I have had the honor and pleasure of working with Val at the Department of the Attorney General in her capacities as Deputy Attorney General, First Deputy, and Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division. Throughout the years, I have found her to be passionate, hardworking, and knowledgeable. Val is an effective leader and an exceptionally quick learner. She is extremely bright, diligent, organized, and conscientious of her work product.

Throughout her career, Val has served in various positions in state government and the private sector. She has also served on community boards in leadership positions. She brings with her years of experience and knowledge.

Val has the credentials, the experience, and character to effectively serve as First Deputy of the Department of Health. I am confident that she will serve the department and the people of the State of Hawaii in a respectful, responsible, and professional manner. Without hesitation, I strongly recommend her for the position.

Sincerely,

Michelle L.A. Sagaysay

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 8:10:49 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
phyllis shimabukuro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and members of the committee,

I strongly support the nomination of Valerie Kato, GM 606 as the Deputy Director, Department of Health for a term to expire 12-07-2026. I have known and worked with Ms. Kato since September 2018 while she was the Deputy Attorney General for the Hawaii Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Resource Management Division, Animal Industry Division, and Agricultural Loan Division. During that period of time, I received many accolades from all three division administrators about Ms. Kato's exceptional quality of work, availability and responsiveness to time sensitive matters. We continued our professional relationship while Ms. Kato was the First Deputy Attorney General from December 2021 till December 2022. Ms. Kato was an important resource and colleague during the emergence of the COVID-19 outbreak and through the historic administrative and fiscal adjustments and challenges because of the surge of pandemic in FY2021-FY2022. Ms. Kato has demonstrated her competence, high intellect, collaborative spirit and sound analytical and decision making skills. The Department of Health and the State of Hawaii is fortunate to have Ms. Kato as our public servant. Ms. Kato will serve the people with honesty, integrity and Aloha. Please give your favorable consideration and confirmation for Valerie Kato, GM 606 as the Deputy Director, Department of Health. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in support.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 8:22:59 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Lynn Miyahira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support Valerie Kato's nomination as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. She is always professional and has good judgment. I've worked with her in a variety of situations and she can always be counted on to get things done. She is one of the hardest working people I know and we are fortunate to have people like Val to step into public service.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Lynn Miyahira

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 8:33:19 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Clarisse Kobashigawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in support of the nomination of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director, Dept. of Health.

With her extensive resume, experience, qualifications, intellect, work ethic and dedication, I have no doubt that she will serve the people of Hawaii extremely well in this position. I have the privilege of knowing her through her community focused work, and she has always been someone that our community could rely on for her quick thinking and trouble shooting skills, especailly in our greatest times of need. I also have no doubt that she will be vigilant and proactive. Always looking and planning ahead, she has helped to guide us through challenging times and shown that through in toughest of circumstances she will lead with decisiveness, integrity and empathy.

She is an excellent nominee for this position. Please confirm her.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 8:46:13 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Susan Asato	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support the confirmation of Ms. Valerie M. Kato as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health for the State of Hawai'i.

Ms. Kato has the experience, education, and integrity to serve in this position. She is currently serving as First Deputy Director for the Department, and also served as Acting Director in the absence of the Director. She was previously First Deputy Attorney General for the State of Hawai'i, and Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division.

Born and raised in Hawai'i, Ms. Kato began her education in the public school system, then graduated from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa with honors. She was accepted into the esteemed Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, DC, and graduated with her JD in 2000. She worked as an attorney in private practice for nearly 20 years, and has remained active with local community organizations and events.

The people of Hawai'i will be well-served by the confirmation of Ms. Valerie M. Kato as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.



**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 9:10:01 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
John Waihee IV	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the appointment of Valerie Kato to serve as the First Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Since serving as First Deputy Director, she has:

- Supported the fiscal and administrative needs of DOH in response to the Maui Wildfires, including expediting contracting, managing travel issues for the department, overseeing permitting for the use of the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center, and supervising the free replacement of vital records lost as a result of the wildfires to Hawaii residents
- Implemented policies and procedures to create efficiencies and reduce bottlenecks in HR/ASO, procurement, and the reorganization processes
- Addressed vacancies by filling critical positions and establishing the position for and hiring a federally funded Workforce Director to examine and create pathways to careers at DOH and increase retention of current employees
- Started necessary planning for redevelopment of DOH's main offices at Kinau Hale and addressed facilities needs
- Increased customer service in the Vital Records Office by expanding office hours to the public and shortening the fulfillment times of orders

Please validate all her service to our great State.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 9:38:03 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Karen Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Members of the Committee:

I am submitting testimony to support the nomination of Ms. Valerie Kato as Deputy Director, Department of Health. I have known Ms. Kato for about nine years. She demonstrates outstanding professionalism and has a proven record of hard work, thoughtfulness, commitment, and dedication in carrying out her responsibilities. Ms. Kato is extremely organized, highly respected, and displays strong and effective leadership and communication skills in bringing people together.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 9:56:18 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Jan Ferrer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I worked with Val when she was a Deputy Attorney General assigned to the Agricultural Loan Division of the Department of Agriculture. She's dilligent and has extensive experience in both the private and state sectors. I support her nomination to serve as the Deputy Director at the Department of Health.

Aloha,

I am writing this letter with great enthusiasm and utmost support to wholeheartedly recommend Ms. Valerie M. Kato for appointment as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I have had the privilege of knowing Ms. Kato for more than ten years, and her outstanding legal skills and dedication to public service make her an exemplary candidate for this esteemed position.

Ms. Kato's impressive legal career is a testament to her exceptional qualifications. She is a highly regarded attorney with extensive administrative experience in working within the State of Hawaii. Having previously worked at the Department of the Attorney General and in her current position as the First Deputy Director, her knowledge of the law is impeccable; and her analytical abilities are second to none. Ms. Kato's contributions to the community are notable, and she has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of the complexities of government administrative systems. Her decisions are grounded in a thorough examination of the law and departmental policies, which makes her an excellent administrator.

In addition to her legal and administrative acumen, Ms. Kato has strong ties to our community. Ms. Kato is a past officer and active member of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association. Her unwavering support through volunteering at various events has helped perpetuate the spirit of "Yuimaaru" (supporting others). Her kind acts of volunteerism have not only helped the association but the greater Hawaii community as well.

Ms. Kato's strong interpersonal skills and her ability to work collaboratively with her colleagues has earned her the respect and admiration of not only the legal profession but also those in the community where she lives. Ms. Kato is a patient and effective communicator, and her open-mindedness and willingness to listen to different perspectives make her an excellent choice as the Deputy Director.

In conclusion, Ms. Kato's exceptional legal and administrative skills, dedicated public service, and outstanding character make her the ideal candidate as the Deputy Director. I have no doubt that her appointment to this esteemed position would be an asset to our community and the entire State of Hawaii.

I wholeheartedly endorse First Deputy Director Valerie M. Kato for the position of Deputy Director, Hawaii State Department of Health. Thank you for your consideration of this highly qualified candidate.

Very Respectfully,



Brandon K. Nakasone, President  
Hawaii United Okinawa Association

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 10:28:19 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Tyler Lam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge this committee to confirm Ms. Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health. Her management experience, patience, good judgment, and ability to create solutions to complex matters make her a sound choice for this position. Mahalo and thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

February 28, 2024

Re: GM 606; Hearing on March 1, 2024, at 1:00 p.m.  
Confirmation of Valerie Kato for Deputy Director of the Department of Health; Testimony in Support

To Senator San Buenaventura and Committee Members:

I am writing in strong support of the nomination of Valerie Kato for the position of Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). In the relatively short period of time, I have worked with her as a Deputy Attorney General, Supervising Deputy Attorney General, First Deputy Attorney General, and now Deputy Director of DOH, I have been impressed by her good judgment, hard work ethic, and ability to solve problems.

Val is smart and a quick thinker. I admire her commitment to public service and her desire to take on challenging issues. Her knowledge of and experience in government, her past legal experience in health care law, and management skills make her ideally qualified to serve as the Deputy Director of DOH.

I believe that Val is not just qualified to be confirmed, but also that the people of Hawaii are well-served by her appointment to this position. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Michelle E. Nakata

February 29, 2024

**VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY**

The Honorable Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

**RE: Testimony in Support of GM No. 606, "Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director, Department of Health, Gubernatorial Nominee, VALERIE KATO, for a term to expire 12-07-2026."**

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lori K. K. Sunakoda and I am submitting this testimony in **strong support** of GM No. 606 relating to the Committee's consideration of Gubernatorial Nominee, Valerie Kato, for confirmation as the Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I was born and raised in Hawaii and actively worked as an attorney in the private and governmental (state and county) sectors for 33 years prior to retiring in December 2022. I worked at the Department of the Attorney General ("Department") for 13 years, during which time I had the opportunity to meet and work with Valerie Kato when Ms. Kato joined the Department in 2018.

During the years that I have known and worked with Ms. Kato, I have been impressed by her breadth of legal knowledge and work experience, effective communication and people skills, strong leadership qualities, diligence and strong work ethic, integrity, fairness, and tireless dedication and commitment to whatever she undertakes.

Based on the above and Ms. Kato's prior experience and accomplishments as the Department's Health Division Supervising Deputy Attorney General and First Deputy Attorney General, I believe that she will continue to provide a significant and invaluable contribution as Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Ms. Kato's nomination for the Committee's consideration.

Sincerely,



Lori K. K. Sunakoda

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 11:29:17 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Dulce Belen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Dulce Belen, and I serve as the Public Health Infrastructure Grant (PHIG) Manager Coordinator at the Hawai‘i Department of Health. Having worked under Ms. Kato’s supervision for the past 7 months, I wholeheartedly endorse her candidacy as the Deputy Director for the Hawai‘i Department of Health. .

Our department faces challenges related to recruitment and employee morale. Ms. Kato’s leadership is a breath of fresh air. Besides her successful leadership from previous positions, I would like to emphasize that I found her approachability and responsiveness qualities crucial in creating a healthier work environment.

Ms. Kato’s responsiveness is commendable. In our dynamic environment, where decisions impact public health, responsiveness is paramount. Her commitment to timely action sets a positive example for the entire department. Additionally, I found Ms. Kato’s approachability vital—it fosters trust, open communication, and a sense of belonging and inclusion.

In conclusion, Ms. Kato’s leadership style aligns perfectly with the department’s needs. Her commitment to approachability and responsiveness will undoubtedly enhance our collective efforts. I wholeheartedly support her nomination for Deputy Director, Department of Health.



**TESTIMONY**

**Senate Committee on Health and Human Services  
Friday, March 1, 2024, 1:00 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room 225 and Videoconference**

**GM 606, Consideration and Confirmation of  
VALERIE KATO  
as Deputy Director of the  
Department of Health**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH). I submit this testimony in my individual capacity.

I am the Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Labor Division and have had the honor and privilege of working with Valerie while she was at the Department of the Attorney General. Valerie is extremely intelligent, and with her 17 years of experience in the private sector, she was a great addition to the department as she had the ability and judgment to make sound, quick decisions. As First Deputy Attorney General, she provided great leadership as she worked on many high-priority and sensitive matters for the State. On top of all of that, she was responsible for managing and supervising the administrative services of the Department.

During the few months since her appointment, Valerie has shown why she is, without doubt, qualified for the position. She has provided administrative support to allow the DOH to quickly respond to Maui Wildfires related matters including much-needed replacement of vital records lost in the wildfires and contracting for needed services. She has also worked for the public benefit by expanding office hours to obtain vital records and providing vital records more expeditiously, thus increasing customer service.

Valerie is representative of what it means to be a public servant. She takes great pride in her work, has a strong work ethic, and has a desire to do the best job possible. What makes Valerie a great leader is that she is committed to doing the best work possible for the public she serves. These are qualities needed for the position of Deputy Director, and the Department of Health would be extremely fortunate to have Valerie as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I respectfully urge you to confirm Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on GM 606 and for considering my testimony.

**Trista N. Speer**

**March 1, 2024, at 1:00 pm**  
**Conference Room 225**

**Senate Committee Health and Human Services**

To: The Honorable Senator Joy San Buenaventura, Chair  
The Honorable Senator Henry Aquino, Vice Chair  
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Trista N. Speer

Re: **Testimony in Strong Support**  
**GM606, Submitting for consideration and confirmation as the Deputy Director,**  
**Department of Health, VALERIE KATO**

Hearing: March 1, 2024, at 1:00 pm  
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

I am Trista N. Speer, and I am writing in my personal capacity. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of Valerie “Val” Kato for the position of First Deputy Director of the Department of Health (DOH).

I worked under Val when she served as the First Deputy Attorney General, and then later as the Supervising Deputy Attorney General for the Health Division at the Department of the Attorney General, from March 2022 through July 2023. In both of those capacities, she demonstrated her proven ability to manage and direct all aspects of a critical state department, and to do so with the utmost integrity, ethical standards, and compassion for her team. Val has consistently displayed her dedication to the people of Hawaii. Her work ethic, integrity, and wellness to collaborate with colleagues is unwavering, and I strongly support her confirmation.

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 11:42:58 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Craig Iha	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura and members of the Committee:

I am in strong support of the nomination of Valerie Kato to be the Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I submit this testimony as a private citizen.

I have known Ms. Kato since 2018 when she joined the Department of the Attorney General as a Deputy in the Commerce and Economic Development Division. I worked directly with Ms. Kato when she was a Deputy Attorney General, Supervising Deputy Attorney General, and the First Deputy Attorney General. Over those years, I have known Ms. Kato to be competent, hard-working, and calm under pressure, especially during the State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I believe that Ms. Kato's demeanor, expertise, and leadership abilities make her the perfect Deputy Director.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Ms. Kato's nomination.

Sincerely,

Craig Y. Iha

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 11:45:52 AM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Diane K. Taira	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Committee Members,

I write in support of the confirmation of Valerie Kato as Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

I worked with Ms. Kato as a colleague, as her supervising attorney when she serviced DOH as a deputy attorney general, and in her capacity as First Deputy at the Department of the Attorney General, until my retirement from the department in 2022. Ms. Kato is a very experienced and accomplished attorney, both in the private sector and as a government attorney, as a litigator, a transactional attorney, and in general advice and counsel. Her strong legal mind is complimented by equally strong people skills, writing skills and her commitment to getting the job done, and done right.

More cannot be said for Ms. Kato's depth of experience, versatility, common sense, caring, and dedication to the effort. I have personally experienced her excellent work product, late night work ethic, and quick turnaround on time sensitive matters. All of these things undoubtedly come into play every day in her role at DOH, and are important to improvements being made now and in the future at the department.

It is no wonder that Ms. Kato's many talents led her to the number two position at the Department of the Attorney General in such quick fashion. And, it is no wonder that Governor Green has tapped Ms. Kato to be the Deputy Director of DOH.

As you can see, Ms. Kato comes with high praise and recommendation. It is my hope that you will agree and act favorably with regard to her nomination as Deputy Director of DOH.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony.

Diane K. Taira

**LATE**

**GM-606**

Submitted on: 2/29/2024 5:34:05 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/1/2024 1:00:00 PM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
FRANCES KUBA	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I hereby support **Valerie Kato** for her my appointment to serve as DOH deputy director.

She is well qualified and has demonstrated much experience and knowledge listed below to successfully serve as the DOH Deputy Director.

Currently serving as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health since July 2023, managing the District Health Offices, the Office of Health Status Monitoring, and the general administrative offices consisting of the Administrative Services Office, the Human Resources Office, the Health Information Systems Office, and the Office of Planning, Policy, and Program Development

First Deputy Attorney General under AG Holly Shikada where she managed and supervised the administrative services and human resources offices and provided input on high-priority and sensitive State matter

Supervising Deputy Attorney General of the Health Division, advising the Department of Health on legal issues in all areas of administration: General, Behavioral Health, Environmental Health, and Health Resources

Deputy Attorney General representing DOH, the Department of Agriculture and various other executive departments

Prior to joining the State, 17 years of private practice as an attorney in Hawaii, mostly at the law firm of Ning Lilly & Jones

She also supported the fiscal and administrative needs of DOH in response to the Maui Wildfires, including expediting contracting, managing travel issues for the department, overseeing permitting for the use of the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center, and supervising the free replacement of vital records lost as a result of the wildfires to Hawaii residents Implemented policies and procedures to create efficiencies and reduce bottlenecking in HR/ASO, procurement, and the reorganization processes

Addressed vacancies by filling critical positions and establishing the position for and hiring a federally funded Workforce Director to examine and create pathways to careers at DOH and increase retention of current employees

Started necessary planning for redevelopment of DOH's main offices at Kinau Hale and addressed facilities needs Increased customer service in the Vital Records Office by expanding office hours to the public and shortening the fulfillment times of orders

**Lynne Waihe'e**  
**4405 Kīlauea Avenue**  
**Honolulu, HI 96816**

Re: Valerie Kato's Nomination to Serve as Deputy Director  
Department of Health  
Governor's Message No. 60

It is my honor to support Valerie Kato's continuance to serve as Deputy Director of the Department of Health. I have known Ms. Kato for twenty-four years. Much of my contact with her has been in the area of community service, which demonstrates her skills in dealing with people and being focused in helping other organizations flourish.

As a Founder of Read To Me International, a nonprofit organization promoting reading to children, I was fortunate to have Ms. Kato serve as our Treasurer. She spent hours reporting to our Board on financial matters. Not only did she keep our books updated, but she also improved the reporting so everyone could understand our financials .

As a supporter of the Hawai'i Okinawan Center, which I had the privilege of serving as Honorary Chair of its first fundraising campaign, I have seen the growth of the Center through the efforts of a younger generation to raise funds, individuals such as Ms. Kato, who undertook last-minute assignments when some individuals didn't come through with their responsibilities. Repeatedly, she kept events running like clockwork by bringing other people together to get the job done.

Prior to joining the State, Ms. Kato served as a private attorney for 17 years. Her experience will serve her well as she continues as First Deputy Director of the Department of Health.

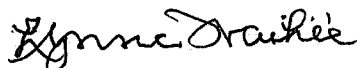
It does not take much to know why Ms. Kato is being asked to continue serving as Deputy Director. Though she has been serving only since July 2023, in just over six months, she has shown her ability to:

- Manage the district health offices.
- Manage the office of health stations.
- Support the human resources office.
- Provide support for the health information systems office.
- Manage the office of planning, policy, and program development.

In addition, Ms. Kato has been responsible for expediting, contracting, and managing travel issues for the department; overseeing permitting for the use of the Lahaina Comprehensive Health Center; and supervising the free replacement of vital records lost as a result of the wildfires to Hawai'i. And the list goes on.

Please validate the contributions Ms. Kato has already made to the Department of Health.

Warmest aloha,



Lynne Waihe'e

***KAREN L. SHISHIDO***  
***31 COELHO WAY***  
***HONOLULU, HAWAII 96817***

February 26, 2024

Honorable Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair  
Aquino, and to the Committee on Health & Human Services:

Governor's Message No. 606

I am honored to testify on behalf of Valerie M. Kato on her nomination to serve as the **First Deputy Director in the State Department of Health** under an executive appointment of Governor Josh Green. It is even more of an honor that I, as an ordinary civil servant, am allowed to testify in this free country as part of my civil right.

As you review Ms. Kato's resume, there seems to be no one near with her impressive credentials and past positions. This can only mean that Ms. Kato is truly a dedicated, loyal, and intelligent perfectionist. She is above all in intelligence, common sense, and passionate in all that she pursues.

I have known Ms. Kato for about 40 years and, in fact, was her roommate for about a year back in the 80s. Living together makes people get to know each other intimately and even then she was always helping and caring for others. I can only say that Ms. Kato has one fault and that is "taking too much on her plate with limited time." However, this means she is the most loyal and dedicated individual to her job, friends, and family. I have seen her work under pressure; but always completing the task at hand with fortitude and exquisiteness.

I would be happy to testify on Ms. Kato's behalf; but am terrified to appear before such an Honorable Legislative Committee.

Respectfully,



Karen L. Shishido

[Karenlani8@gmail.com](mailto:Karenlani8@gmail.com)  
(808) 551-7868