

Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura
Chair, Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

I am humbled to have been nominated to serve on the Disability and Communication Access Board. As requested, my answers to the questionnaire are set forth below.

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Disability and Communication Access Board?

If confirmed, I would be serving a second term as a member of the Disability and Community Access Board ("DCAB".) In my last appointment, I served as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on the DCAB.

By way of background, I was nominated five (5) years ago, by then DCAB Executive Director Francine Wai, to serve on the Department of Health's predecessor agency, Hawaii State Coordinating Council on Deafness. Significantly, I met Francine Wai forty-five (45) years ago when I was a part-time sign language instructor at Kaimuki Community School for Adults. Also, I taught sign language classes at Kaimuki, McKinley and Wahiawa Community School for Adults for 25 years.

Last term, I served as the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on the DCAB. I would like to continue serving as a member of the DCAB in discharging the agency's responsibility in providing effective communication access, and services to the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind community.

This year, we welcomed Justin "Pono" Tokioka to the DCAB Committee, who was hired to serve as the Communication Specialist. Pono and I have chaired and represented the United States in the national and international deaf golf tournaments since 2011. We have had different life experiences and access to communication but this allows us to bring different perspectives and contributions to the table. I look forward to working with him if I am appointed to serve on the Board.

2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities of a member of the Disability and Communications Access Board?

My goal is to advocate, educate and bring consumer awareness as it relates to communication access services for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind in programs and activities provided by state departments and agencies.

Communication access services include interpreter services, real time captioning services, and computer assisted notetaking services.

3. Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Disability and Communication Access Board, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of the Disability and Communication Access Board.

I have served on a number of non-profit organizations for the deaf, including the Hawaii Services on Deafness; Aloha State Association for the Deaf; the Georgia E. Morikawa Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; and the Hawaii State Council on Deafness. I feel I am sensitive to the needs and issues concerning the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind community.

I worked in a supervisory capacity, as an operating accountant, for forty (40) years, with the Department of Defense in Hawaii, Okinawa, and Cleveland Ohio. I retired from HQ Naval Health Clinic (Pearl Harbor Shipyard Medical) in September 2020. I was the Head Junior Varsity Girls Coach for 12 years, at Punahou School from 1992 to 2004. In my capacity as a supervisor, overseeing civilian and military accountants and accounting technicians and as a junior varsity coach (leading the team to ILH junior varsity championships), during my tenure, I had to make decisions on a regular basis.

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

If I am appointed as a member, and on the Standing Committee of the Communication Access Board, I want to maintain accessibility and transparency to the deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind community. My goal is to provide the highest level of communication access to the disabled community, to improve what we currently have, and to bring awareness to the services currently available so that no deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind person is left out.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit the Disability and Communications Access Board?

Hard work, perseverance, and commitment. My motto, which has served me well in life, has been to try three (3) times as hard and to never give up. Through my parent's advocacy, I was one of a handful of students to be mainstreamed from Diamond Head School for the Deaf and Blind (sign language was not taught), to and through the public school system (no sign language interpreters). I transferred to Kahala Elementary School as a sixth grader, Central Intermediate School, graduated from McKinley High School in 1971 and went on to receive a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), New York in 1976. This was before ADA came into being so we did not have federally mandated communications access to services.

I played on the RIT Golf Team for five (5) years and was a NCAA Division III All American Third Team Awardee. I was inducted into the RIT Sports Hall of Fame in 2001 and McKinley High School in 1999. And I recently retired after 40 years of federal civil service as an accounting supervisor.

I have my parents, career counselors and coaches to thank for guiding me along the way and helping me realize my goals and dreams. Hopefully, my story will encourage others in the deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind community to aspire to dream big, as I did and to never give up.

6. Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit the Disability and Access Board?

My son Brandon and I worked together in producing a communication tool for the deaf and hard of hearing community. He designed a software application, called MyEar, which transcribes voice to text in real time using an iPhone, iPad or Apple Watch.

For those deaf and/or hard of hearing persons like myself, who have lived in the "hearing world", raised to lip read, catching less than half of what is said, and without access to sign language interpreters (in the workplace, among family or friends), MyEar has been a life changing tool. It has given deaf and hard-of-hearing job opportunities (i.e. driving Uber and Lyft). Our goal is to get it into the schools so that all deaf and hearing-of hearing students can "hear" and have full access to communication services. This application can be used at the meetings to facilitate communications among board members.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service on the Disability and Communication Access Board? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interests?

I don't foresee any possible conflicts of interests. The DCAB is tasked with providing communication access and services to the deaf, hearing impaired and deaf-blind. I see my responsibility as applying the law fairly and equally to all groups within the state level and at state agencies/programs.

If a possible conflict of interests was raised, I would discuss it with the DCAB Chairperson and Executive Director. If a clear conflict of interests was evident, I would remove myself from the discussion or voting process altogether.

Gerald M. Isobe

March 21, 2024



DISABILITY AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS BOARD

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April 3, 2024

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Governor's Message 666 – Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the Disability and Communication Access Board, Gubernatorial Nominee,
Gerald Isobe for a Term to Expire June 30, 2027

The Disability and Communication Access Board (DCAB) strongly supports the nomination of Mr. Gerald Isobe to our Board for a second term to expire on June 30, 2027.

The Board is a statewide Governor-appointed Board with a majority of its members being persons with disabilities or family members. The Board's mission is to advocate and promote full inclusion, independence, equal access, and quality of life for persons with disabilities in society.

In the capacity of a consumer/person with a disability representing the population of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, Mr. Isobe brings valuable resources and knowledge to lead DCAB into the next generation of technology and commerce.

Mr. Isobe serves as Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Communication Access advocating and bringing awareness of the diverse communication access tools and methods to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act definition of effective communication.

Thank you for your positive consideration of Mr. Isobe to serve on the Board for a second term.

Respectfully submitted,

KIRBY L. SHAW
Executive Director

March 17, 2024

To whom it may concern,

It is with great honor and pride I support the renomination of Mr. Gerald Isobe to the Disability and Communication Access Board. I have known Mr. Isobe for over 40 years and known him to always face challenges with strength and dignity. Many years ago he told me he lives his life as a role model for the deaf community. He continuously accepts challenges and demonstrates persons with disabilities have no limitations.

What impresses me most about Mr. Isobe is his attitude about life. Having been born deaf he leads by example. He accepts his disability and expects to be treated the same as everyone. In 1970, he became the first deaf person to graduate from public school, McKinley High School. The school honored him in 1999 by placing him in the Hall of Honor.

At the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) he became the first deaf person to graduate from that school. Although, not playing high school golf, he tried out for the RIT golf team as a walk on. Mr. Isobe made the team, attained NCAA All-American status and was eventually inducted into RIT's Hall of Fame as a golfer.

In 1987, he was named one of the United States Jaycee's "Ten Outstanding Young American". Recently, Mr. Isobe and his son Brandon developed the MyEar app. The app translates voice into text on your iPhone. Released in the Apple Store in November 2018 the MyEar app will help the deaf and hearing impaired to communicate with others.

I play golf with Mr. Isobe on most Sundays and know him as a fair and strong competitor. He is very respectful and inclusive when dealing with others. As an educator he taught me to see life through a different set of lenses and to appreciate the many things I have taken for granted throughout my life. Those with disabilities face challenges we could not imagine unless placed into those situations. Just watching Mr. Isobe live his life helps one to understand we are not created equal and there are those who need to be supported. As a respected member of the community Mr. Isobe will be a valuable, contributing addition to your Board.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Cary Miyashiro, President
Quad D Solutions LLC

GM-666

Submitted on: 4/3/2024 9:06:07 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/3/2024 1:00:00 PM

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Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristine Pagano	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the nomination of Gerald Isobe to serve on the Disability and Communication Access Board. I've worked with Gerald for a few years before the COVID-19 pandemic as a co-chair for a non-profit, The Georgia E. Morikawa Center, golf fundraisers. Gerald is a teamplayer and worked well with others in planning and coordinating the fundraisers. He is a compassionate individual who cares for people with disabilities especially for the deaf and hard of hearing community. He is innovative and inspires many by sharing his experiences with others. Gerald is a great asset to serve on the Disability and Communication Access Board as he understands current disability issues to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.