

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 16 2025

RE: JUD. COM. NO. 28

Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi
President of the Senate
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2025
State of Hawaii

Sir:

Your Committee on Judiciary, to which was referred Judiciary Communication No. 28, submitting for study and consideration the appointment of:

DISTRICT FAMILY COURT OF THE SECOND CIRCUIT

J.C. No. 28 SONYA H. TOMA,
for a term to expire in 6 years,

begs leave to report as follows:

Your Committee reviewed the personal history, resume, and statement submitted by Sonya H. Toma for service on the District Family Court of the Second Circuit.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Sonya H. Toma from fourteen individuals.

Your Committee received testimony in opposition to the appointment of Sonya H. Toma from the Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform and two individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Sonya H. Toma from the Hawaii State Bar Association.

The Hawaii State Bar Association Board of Directors (HSBA Board) uses a rating system that considers several criteria to assist the HSBA Board in making a recommendation to your Committee on whether the appointee is "qualified" or "not qualified". Specifically, the criteria the HSBA Board employs is the same criteria found in the American Bar Association's Guidelines for



Reviewing Qualifications of Candidates for State Judicial Office. Those guidelines include the following criteria, which are not exclusive: integrity, diligence, legal knowledge and ability, professional experience, temperament, financial responsibility, public service, and ability to perform the responsibilities and duties required of the position for which the applicant has been appointed. Upon review of the established criteria, the HSBA Board found the appointee to be qualified for the position of District Family Court Judge of the Second Circuit.

Ms. Toma attended the University of Oregon where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science. She received her Juris Doctor from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where she was the recipient of the Maui County Bar Association Arthur T. Ueoka Scholarship. Ms. Toma has been licensed to practice law in Hawai'i since 2007 and is also licensed to practice in Indiana and Nevada.

Since 2023, Ms. Toma has worked as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the Maui County Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, where she prosecutes misdemeanor and felony criminal cases in family and circuit court and traffic, petty misdemeanor, and misdemeanor criminal cases in district court. Ms. Toma is also currently a Kids First Parent Co-Facilitator for Kids First Hawaii, where she facilitates parent group instruction in the Maui mandatory Kids First Program for separating and divorcing parents and educates parents about the impact of divorce and separation on children to promote effective communication and peaceful co-parenting. Before becoming a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Ms. Toma worked at the Department of the Corporation Counsel for the County of Maui, where she was a First Deputy Corporation Counsel. As First Deputy Corporation Counsel, Ms. Toma's duties included supervising the Counseling and Drafting Division representing county departments, the County Council, the Mayor's office, and various boards and commissions.

Ms. Toma's legal career also includes practice in family law. From 2021 to 2023, Ms. Toma worked as a Deputy Attorney General for the Department of the Attorney General, where she represented various state agencies in family court, including Child Welfare Services, Department of Health, Office of the Public Guardian, Department of Education, and Judiciary. As a Deputy Attorney General, Ms. Toma met with clients, appeared at meetings, hearings, motions, settlement negotiations, and bench trials, and drafted motions, memoranda, and other pleadings. Before her work



at the Department of the Attorney General, Ms. Toma was a Staff Attorney at the Family Law Self-Help Center at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, Nevada. Ms. Toma's work as a Staff Attorney included conducting interviews evaluations, and providing legal information assistance for domestic violence protection orders, divorce, custody, paternity, adoption, termination of parental rights, name change, guardianship, and other miscellaneous family law matters.

In addition to her professional work, Ms. Toma has contributed significantly to her community. Ms. Toma currently serves as President for Maui Okinawa Kenjin Kai, and has previously served as the organization's Corresponding Secretary and Vice President. Additionally, Ms. Toma has volunteered as an attorney for Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii and the Second Circuit Court's Self-Help Center. As a volunteer attorney for Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, Ms. Toma gave legal advice to pre-screened clients in the areas of family law and bankruptcy and accepted two pro bono cases from the clinic. At the Second Circuit Court's Self-Help Center, Ms. Toma assisted the public with legal information and form preparation and volunteered at the Family Assistance Center Table for people impacted by the 2023 Maui Wildfires.

Testimony submitted in support of Ms. Toma's appointment commends her thoughtfulness, compassion, honesty, integrity, humility, and calm and composed temperament, even in adverse circumstances.

Your Committee finds that, based on the testimony submitted on her behalf, responses to questions asked by the members of your Committee, and your Committee's review of information about her and her qualifications, Sonya H. Toma has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a District Family Court Judge of the Second Circuit, and possesses the legal expertise and integrity to fully and faithfully discharge the duties associated with that judicial office.

As affirmed by the record of votes of the members of your Committee on Judiciary that is attached to this report, your Committee, after full consideration of the background, experience, and qualifications of the appointee, has found the appointee to be qualified for the position to which appointed and recommends that the Senate consent to the appointment.



Respectfully submitted on
behalf of the members of the
Committee on Judiciary,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karl Rhoads". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "K".

KARL RHOADS, Chair



The Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
State of Hawai'i

Record of Votes
Committee on Judiciary
JDC
Consent

Gov. Msg./Jud. Com. No.:* <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">JC 24</div>	Committee Referral: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">JDC</div>	Date: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">4/15/25</div>		
<input type="checkbox"/> The Committee is reconsidering its decision				
The Recommendation is: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent 2347</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Consent 2349</div></div>				
Members	Aye	Aye (WR)	Nay	Excused
RHOADS, Karl (C)	✓			
GABBARD, Mike (VC)				✓
CHANG, Stanley	✓			
SAN BUENAVENTURA, Joy A.	✓			
AWA, Brenton				✓
TOTAL	3			2
Recommendation: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"><div style="text-align: center;"><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted</div><div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted</div></div>				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: <div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive; margin-top: 10px;">[Signature]</div>				
Distribution: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"><div style="text-align: center;">Original File with Committee Report</div><div style="text-align: center;">Yellow Clerk's Office</div><div style="text-align: center;">Pink Drafting Agency</div><div style="text-align: center;">Goldenrod Committee File Copy</div></div>				

***Only one Message/Communication per Record of Votes**