

STAND. COM. REP. NO. **2007**

Honolulu, Hawaii

APR 25 2025

RE: JUD. COM. NO. 29

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. 29, submitting for study and consideration the appointment of:

DISTRICT FAMILY COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT

J.C. No. 29 MARIA F. PENN
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 Judge Maria F. Penn for service on the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Your Committee received testimony in support of the appointment of Judge Maria F. Penn from Hawai'i Women Lawyers and twenty-one individuals.

Your Committee received comments on the appointment of Judge Maria F. Penn 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

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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 First Circuit.

Judge Penn attended the University of Southern California, where she received a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance. She received her Juris Doctor from the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Judge Penn has been licensed to practice law in the State of Hawai'i since 2003.

Since 2022, Judge Penn has worked as a Per Diem Judge for the Family Court of the First Circuit, where she serves on an as-needed basis in all divisions of family court, including the Special Division, Juvenile Division, Domestic Division, and in Courtroom 8D, which is the family court criminal courtroom that adjudicates misdemeanors and petty misdemeanors. Judge Penn is also a solo practitioner, where she engages in general litigation for both plaintiffs and defendants. She handles cases in a variety of legal areas including contracts, construction, employment discrimination, wrongful termination, personal injury, medical malpractice, constitutional and civil rights violations, excessive force, wrongful death, divorce, paternity, temporary restraining orders, and federal and state asset forfeiture. Judge Penn's legal experience includes legal research, legal writing, and trial work, and she has assisted in criminal trials with jury selection and has prepared and drafted various motions and memoranda.

Before becoming a Per Diem Judge and a solo practitioner, Judge Penn worked for the Law Office of Myles S. Breiner, Attorney at Law, ALC, first as a paralegal and later as an attorney. As a lawyer, Judge Penn's work included providing legal counsel and litigating issues in a variety of practice areas and engaging in extensive settlement negotiations in various civil cases.

Judge Penn is also an active member of her community. She currently volunteers for Courts in the Community, and previously volunteered as the Head Coach for the Hawaii Baptist Academy Mock Trial team and with the Family Court Kids First Program with the Judiciary.



Testimony submitted in support of Judge Penn's appointment notes that she is astute, skillful, highly ethical, judicious, and compassionate. Testimony further notes Judge Penn's competency, honesty, reasonableness, and professionalism.

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, Judge Maria F. Penn has the knowledge, dedication, and other competencies to be a District Family Court Judge of the First 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,




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 29</div>	Committee Referral: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">JDC</div>	Date: <div style="font-size: 1.2em; font-family: cursive;">4/24/25</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; margin-top: 5px;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adopted <input type="checkbox"/> Not Adopted </div>				
Chair's or Designee's Signature: <div style="font-size: 1.5em; font-family: cursive; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;">  </div>				
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em;"> <div>Distribution:</div> <div>Original</div> <div>Yellow</div> <div>Pink</div> <div>Goldenrod</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;"> <div>File with Committee Report</div> <div>Clerk's Office</div> <div>Drafting Agency</div> <div>Committee File Copy</div> </div>				

*Only one Message/Communication per Record of Votes