

Statement from Asianna Saragosa-Torres

I have dedicated the past four years to mental health advocacy in Hawaii, working alongside a variety of respected nonprofit organizations, including Mental Health America, Erika's Lighthouse, The National Alliance on Mental Illness, and The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. My efforts have been recognized with a Senate Certificate for my contributions to mental health advocacy and acknowledgment from local news outlets for the impact I've made within our community, including sharing my personal story. Additionally, I have received national recognition for my work, including being nominated as an honoree for the National Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City. This honor allowed me to represent Hawaii with pride and promote my passion for mental health on a larger stage. Mental health is a cause close to my heart, and I am eager to expand my impact. Serving on the State Council on Mental Health would allow me to deepen my involvement and further advocate for this essential issue in our community.

I am passionate about leadership, resilience, and creating change—qualities essential for a member of the State Council on Mental Health. As a former Miss Latina Hawaii and the current Miss Hawaii Volunteer 2025, I've developed strong leadership skills, and I'm proud to represent not only the state of Hawaii, but mental health advocacy, which is my platform, at the Miss Volunteer America 2025 competition in June. My own experience with depression and bullying, including a suicide attempt at 15, drives my commitment to mental health advocacy. I understand the struggles many face, and I want to be a voice for those who need support. I believe change begins with us. Serving on the State Council would allow me to use my personal journey and passion to make a lasting impact in our community.

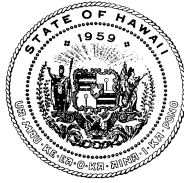
At 24, the accomplishments, skills, and experiences I've gained are too vast to cover in just a few sentences, but here are a few highlights. Overcoming depression has been one of my greatest achievements, teaching me that life is beautiful and full of opportunity. I am a radio DJ for Hawaii's #1 morning show, The Keola Show, and the reigning Miss Hawaii Volunteer 2025. My work has earned me recognition across local platforms like HNN, KHON2, and KITV4. I've shared my story with over 5,000 students across Oahu and Kauai through Hawaii DOE. Last year, I was honored as a Puerto Rican Day Parade honoree in New York City, and I received a Senate Certificate of Recognition for my mental health advocacy efforts. Additionally, I've volunteered with numerous nonprofits and organizations, driven by a deep commitment to serving my community and state. My personal experiences with bullying and my dedication to mental health advocacy fuel my passion to continue making a difference in Hawaii.

I am eager to be part of the change. Mental health is still deeply stigmatized, and I hope to use my personal experiences to break that stigma, grow as an individual, and drive meaningful change. My goal is to create a supportive and understanding community for all, amplifying the voices of those who are often unheard.

Three qualities that define me are determination, leadership, and a commitment to success. I strive to embody these values by constantly pursuing excellence, ensuring my voice is heard, and never backing down until I achieve my goals.

My personal experiences make me a valuable asset to the State Council on Mental Health. As a member of Gen Z, I bring a unique perspective, especially on issues like social media bullying, which is a significant concern for youth mental health today. Having faced both in-person and online bullying, I understand the challenges many young people encounter. In addition to my experiences, my accomplishments reflect my resilience and commitment to making a difference. Overcoming hardship has shaped who I am, and I believe it can inspire and encourage others. My goal is to be a positive role model in our community, using my experiences to help others and drive meaningful change.

A potential conflict of interest could arise from my position as a radio host, but I want to emphasize that my primary focus is to promote mental health advocacy, which I already do on the show. My cohosts and I are all strong advocates for mental health and are united in this cause. To protect the integrity of the State Council on Mental Health, I will ensure that no sensitive or confidential information is shared. On the positive side, if the State Council on Mental Health has public messages or initiatives to share, my platform could serve as a valuable tool to amplify those efforts. This would not only avoid a conflict of interest but could actually benefit the State Council by reaching a wider audience and raising awareness in the community.



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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of GM523
Submitting for Consideration and Confirmation to the
State Council on Mental Health
Gubernatorial Nominee, ASIANNA SARAGOSA-TORRES,
for a term to expire 06-30-2028**

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

Hearing Date and Time: February 28, 2025, 1:00 p.m. Location: Room 225 and Video

- 1 **Department Position:** The Department of Health ("Department") supports Asianna Saragosa-
- 2 Torres' nomination and confirmation to the State Council on Mental Health ("Council").
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Hawaii Revised Statutes §334-10 provides for establishing the
- 4 State Council on Mental Health within the Department for administrative purposes to advise
- 5 the Department on the allocation of resources, statewide needs, and programs affecting two or
- 6 more service areas. It serves as an advocate for adults with serious mental illness, children with
- 7 serious emotional disturbances, other individuals with mental illnesses or emotional problems,
- 8 and individuals with combined mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The Council's
- 9 mandate includes reviewing and commenting on the statewide comprehensive, integrated
- 10 service plan. It also serves as the State Planning Council for federal Mental Health Block Grant
- 11 program purposes. The Council can have up to twenty-one members, of which a majority
- 12 should be non-providers of mental health services. The majority should also be non-state
- 13 employees. The mandate seeks that all service area boards of the State are represented and
- 14 adequate representation of parents and children with serious emotional disturbances. It
- 15 requires the Council to have members from the principal state agencies concerning mental
- 16 health, education, vocational rehabilitation, criminal justice, housing, Medicaid, and social

1 services; Public and private entities concerned with the need, planning, operation, funding, and
2 use of mental health services and related support services; Adults with serious mental illnesses
3 who are receiving, or have received, mental health services; The families of such adults or
4 families of children with serious emotional disturbances; and the Hawaii Advisory Commission
5 on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.

6 Asianna Saragosa-Torres, a passionate consumer advocate, is set to join the Council. Her
7 extensive involvement in public relations and community outreach, with a primary focus on
8 mental health awareness, is a testament to her dedication. Currently serving as a Community
9 Outreach Coordinator at the City and County of Honolulu Emergency Management Services
10 Department, she is engaged in the provision of housing and shelter needs of individuals with
11 mental health illnesses.

12 Ms. Saragosa-Torres's appointment is expected to enhance the SCMH's advocacy for
13 young adults and youth. Her professional experiences in broadcast and social media, coupled
14 with her leadership roles in various civic organizations, have equipped her with a unique
15 perspective and skills. Her numerous honors and achievements further validate her suitability
16 for this role.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this nomination and your consideration of
18 Asianna Saragosa-Torres.

GM-523

Submitted on: 2/26/2025 2:23:47 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Randolph Hack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To Chair and Committee Members:

I strongly support ASIANNA SARAGOSA-TORRES nomination for the State Council on Mental Health. She has been an outstanding educator in mental health to the young poeple in our community through NAMI Hawaii.

I'm chair for the Oahu Service Aea Board on Mental health and Substance Abuse and served four terms on the State Council on Mental Health, two independently and two as State Mental Health Agency designee.

Thank you for your sonsideration of this matter.

Randolph Hack

GM-523

Submitted on: 2/27/2025 12:02:50 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/28/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kumi Macdonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha.

Asianna has been an amazing NAMI Ending the Silence presenter and has a powerful story to share with youth across the state of Hawaii. I support her work in advancing mental health for everyone.

Mahalo,

Kumi Macdonald