

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances?

As a Native Hawaiian committed to the wellbeing of our communities, I believe serving on this commission is an opportunity to elevate culturally grounded approaches to addressing substance use and behavioral health. Our people have been disproportionately impacted by colonization and systemic inequities. I want to ensure that policies and programs reflect the lived experiences, strengths, and cultural wisdom of our communities. This seat allows me to advocate for healing-centered strategies rooted in connections to Hawaii.

As the Community Education representative, and commission Co-Chair, I am also deeply committed to advocating for increased education around culturally responsive care for *all* of the diverse communities who call Hawai'i home. I believe we must provide education and guidance to strengthen systems of care that are culturally safe, trauma-informed, and rooted in respect for the unique histories and worldviews of every community impacted by substance use and behavioral health challenges.

2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances?

Members of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances play a critical role in supporting the Department of Health and advising state leadership on substance use-related matters. Our responsibilities include:

- Assisting the Department of Health in coordinating action programs among community agencies to address alcohol and drug use;
- Helping to carry out educational programs aimed at preventing and deterring substance use;
- Creating public awareness and fostering understanding of the impacts of alcohol and drug use;
- Serving in an advisory capacity to the Governor, Director of Health, and other state departments on matters related to substance use and recovery;
- Supporting the development and review of the State plan for alcohol and other substance use;
- Providing input necessary for securing and managing federal funding for substance use programs;

- Preparing an annual report to the Governor summarizing the Commission's work and recommendations for legislation.

In fulfilling these duties, members are responsible for staying informed on current and emerging practices in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, recovery, and aftercare, while offering community-centered, culturally informed perspectives that shape the direction of substance use policy in Hawai'i.

3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities as a member of the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the board.

My qualifications are rooted in both lived experience and professional practice in behavioral health, substance use, and culturally grounded systems of care. I currently serve as the Program Coordinator for Papa Ola Lōkahi's substance use and mental health initiatives, and as the Project Manager for the SAMHSA-funded 'Ohana Center of Excellence for AANHPI Behavioral Health. In these roles, I lead the development of training, curriculum, and policy guidance that uplift cultural strengths, center healing, and respond to the disproportionate impacts of substance use and mental health concerns within Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

A culturally focused lens is essential to addressing the root causes of substance use and promoting sustainable healing in Hawai'i. Approaches that center Indigenous values, place-based knowledge, practice-based evidence, and relational care offer not only relevant frameworks for Native Hawaiian communities, but also meaningful pathways for systemic change across all communities. My experience with cultural models, through program development, education, and policy work, brings a critical perspective to the Commission's responsibilities. These approaches align with broader efforts to re-center healing, promote culturally safe systems of care, and ensure that communities most impacted by substance use are accurately represented and equitably resourced. Sharing this knowledge at the Commission level helps ensure that recommendations are grounded in the lived realities of Hawai'i's diverse populations.

My work is intentionally intersectional, engaging reentry, housing justice, workforce development, harm reduction, and peer-led recovery, while keeping cultural identity at the center. Through years of collaboration with both local and national partners, I've built strong pilina across government agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations. These relationships, combined with my experience in training, federal grant

management, legislative advocacy, and systems change, position me to serve as a bridge between policy systems and the people they are intended to support.

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

During my term, I hope to:

- Uplift Indigenous and cultural knowledge systems as valid and necessary foundations for addressing substance use;
- Address disparities in access to care for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders by advocating for culturally focused healing programs;
- Explore the development of recovery community organizations that center culture as a source of identity, belonging, and transformation;
- Support education and training efforts to ensure that providers across Hawai'i are equipped to deliver or connect with an organization/practitioner that can provide culturally responsive and culturally safe care;
- Serve as a bridge between community voices and policy decision-makers, ensuring that the lived experiences, solutions, and requests of our communities are reflected in statewide strategies.

Above all, I want to be a voice.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will benefit the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.

Grounded: rooted in culture, community, and relationships to 'āina, ensuring that every recommendation I make is aligned with collective wellbeing and cultural responsibility.

Collaborative: pilina—building meaningful relationships across disciplines, sectors, and cultural communities—to promote collaboration in our collective work.

Strategic: I try to approach challenges with both a systems-level and community-centered lens, identifying opportunities to shift structures in ways that honor culture and support long-term healing.

6. Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a member.

My role as Project Manager for the 'Ohana Center of Excellence has given me the opportunity to develop culturally focused trainings for health and behavioral health providers across the country. In doing so, I have worked closely with communities across

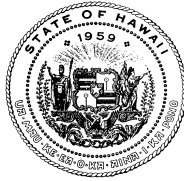
the AANHPI spectrum to uplift the unique strengths, communication styles, and worldviews of each culture. Our trainings help providers understand not only cultural etiquette and historical context, but also the deep complexities—including regional differences, layered identities, and forced migration—that shape an individual’s experience with care.

This experience has strengthened my ability to build education that fosters empathy, accuracy, and safety in care delivery, an essential lens I hope to bring to my work on the Commission.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Hawai’i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances? How would you overcome conflicts of interest?

Given my professional role coordinating culturally focused behavioral health and substance use projects, there may be times when the council would want to hear a presentation about a project that I help oversee. In such cases, I would ensure that another member of my organization or an external representative speaks on the matter.

I am fully committed to transparency, accountability, and ethical integrity. I will follow all protocols, disclose potential conflicts proactively, and seek guidance from appropriate legal or administrative advisors when necessary.



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 GM0545
Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on
Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances, Gubernatorial Nominee, LILINOE
KAUAHIKAUA, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.**

SENATOR JOY SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

April 7, 2025, 1:00PM, Room 225

- 1 **Fiscal Implications:** None
- 2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (Department) strongly supports this measure.
- 3 **Department Testimony:** The Department of Health strongly supports the nomination and
- 4 confirmation of Ms. Lilinoe Kauahikaua to the Hawaii Advisory Commission and Drug Abuse
- 5 and Controlled Substances (HACDACS) for a term to expire on June 30, 2028. HACDACS
- 6 appointees represent a cross-section of the community, including, but not limited to,
- 7 pharmacological, medical, community, and business affairs, youth action, educational, legal
- 8 defense, enforcement, and corrections segments of the community, under HRS §329-2.
- 9 Ms. Kauahikaua currently serves as an interim appointment for HACDACS within the Education
- 10 category and is the Commission's Co-Chair.
- 11 Ms. Kauahikaua has over ten years of experience serving as a Native Hawaiian population expert
- 12 about behavioral health, health, and substance misuse, serving in various roles and contributing
- 13 to academia through guest lectures and publications. Currently she is the population health
- 14 specialist for Papa Ola Lōkahi's Native Hawaiian Health Board and the program coordinator for
- 15 the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) 'Ohana Center of

1 Excellence. Her current role focuses on cultural approaches to addictions, behavioral health, and
2 incarceration/reentry.

3 Ms. Kauahikaua brings years of experience in recovery and addiction treatment from an
4 indigenous lens and connections within Papa Ola Lōkahi, various community grassroots
5 nonprofits, and national organizations.

6 In addition to HACDACS, Ms. Kauahikaua also serves on boards of ‘Ekolu Mea Nui, Going
7 Home Hawai‘i, and Kinohi Mana Nui, as the cultural committee co-chair for The Going Home
8 Hawai‘i Consortium, and on committees for the Institute of Violence and Trauma (IVAT) and
9 Hawai‘i Substance Use Professional Development (SUPD) initiative. We respectfully request
10 your expeditious and favorable consideration for the nomination of Ms. Kauahikaua to serve on
11 HACDACS.

12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of a committed volunteer whose
13 appointment adds to the cross-section of community interests represented on HACDACS.

April 04, 2025

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President
Members of the Senate
Thirty-Third Legislature
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Senate President Kouchi and Members of the Senate,

It is with great honor and enthusiasm that **I submit this letter of support for the appointment of Lilinoe Kauahikaua as a member of the Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS)**. Ms. Kauahikaua has demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication in her role as Co-Chair of HACDACS, and her expertise in social work, Native Hawaiian health, and culturally responsive care makes her an invaluable asset to the Commission.

Ms. Kauahikaua's professional and academic background reflects a deep commitment to addressing substance use, behavioral health, and social justice within Native Hawaiian communities. Her work as a Program Coordinator for the AANHPI 'Ohana Center of Excellence for Behavioral Health at Papa Ola Lōkahi has been instrumental in shaping policy, training stakeholders, and advocating for culturally relevant approaches to substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery. Through her leadership in statewide stakeholder meetings and community listening sessions, she has actively engaged diverse voices to create a Hawaiian culture-based continuum of care—ensuring that Native Hawaiian values and practices are centered in healing and recovery.

Her extensive experience in research, policy development, and program implementation speaks to her ability to bridge academia, practice, and advocacy. As a co-author of the conceptual framework for a new system of care for Native Hawaiians and substance use, she has contributed to shaping the future of addiction services in the state. Additionally, her work in harm reduction, reentry, and incarceration reform highlights her holistic approach to addressing the root causes of substance use and trauma in marginalized communities.

Beyond her technical expertise, Ms. Kauahikaua is an award-winning leader and mentor, recognized for her contributions to the field of social work, higher education, and community advocacy. Her ability to bring people together, foster meaningful discussions, and drive tangible change aligns perfectly with the mission of HACDACS. **I strongly urge you to confirm Lilinoe Kauahikaua's appointment to HACDACS.** Her lived experience, professional expertise, and cultural grounding will continue to elevate the Commission's efforts in promoting substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery for the people of Hawaii.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further information is needed.

Sincerely,

Ku'uleialohaonālani Salzer

Co-Chair, Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances
(HACDACS)

GM-545

Submitted on: 4/4/2025 9:20:44 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jeri gertz	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

I am writing to offer my support for the appointment of Lilinoe Kauahikaua to the HACDACS.

I have watched Lilinoe bloom and grow in her dedication to her work in the fields of cultural education and healing modalities.

She is resourceful, resilient, and " plays well with others."

i believe her strong spirit and focus on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities needs will serve her well on this committee.

Lilinoe will be an asset to any group she joins.

Mahalo for your time and consideration,

respectfully submitted,

Jeri Gertz

yogertz2020@gmail.com

808-989-3208

GM-545

Submitted on: 4/4/2025 11:53:49 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Kauahikaua	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly **support** the appointment of **Lilinoe Kauahikaua** to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

I've had the privilege of being related to Lilinoe and have seen her dedication to community, culture, education, and healing. She brings professional expertise and lived experience to this work, always showing integrity, care, and a strong voice for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Lilinoe's work centers on culturally grounded behavioral health care, focusing on healing through connection to the land and cultural identity. She effectively bridges community voices with policy spaces, making her a thoughtful and impactful leader on HACDACS.

I urge the committee to confirm her appointment.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
David Kauahikaua

LATE

GM-545

Submitted on: 4/6/2025 1:16:38 PM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimo Apaka	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF LILINOE KAUAHIKAUA TO THE HAWAI'I ADVISORY COMMISSION ON DRUG ABUSE AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (HACDACS)

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Hearing Date: April 7, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

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

My name is Kimo, and I am writing in strong support of the appointment of Lilinoe Kauahikaua to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

I have had the privilege of knowing Lilinoe and have seen her deep dedication to community, culture, education and healing. She brings both professional expertise and lived experience to this work, and she always shows up with integrity, care, and a strong voice for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities.

Lilinoe's work centers on culturally grounded behavioral health care, with a strong focus on healing through connection to 'āina and cultural identity. She has a powerful way of bridging community voices with policy spaces, and I believe she will continue to be a thoughtful and impactful leader on HACDACS.

I respectfully urge the committee to confirm her appointment.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kimo Apaka

Apakafalls@gmail.com

808-313-2307

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF LILINOE KAUAHIKAUA TO THE HAWAI'I ADVISORY COMMISSION ON DRUG ABUSE AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (HACDACS)

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Hearing Date: April 7, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

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

My name is Jordan Antonio, and I am writing in **strong support** of the appointment of **Lilinoe Kauahikaua** to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

I have had the privilege of watching Lilinoe's personal, academic, and professional journey(s), all of which make her an ideal candidate for HACDACS. Her lived experience and healing through cultural connection and community drove her to pursue a Masters of Social Work. As a full-time student, she ran multiple projects that directly helped fellow students and community members approach recovery through a cultural lens. As a current doctoral student and Papa Ola Lōkahi employee, she continues to use all her platforms to champion culturally grounded behavioral healthcare, especially for the most marginalized communities. Her leadership, 'ike, and passion for community well-being will make her an invaluable member of HACDACS.

I respectfully urge the committee to confirm her appointment.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jordan Antonio

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, PhD student & graduate research assistant

Phone: (209) 872-6783

Email: jordan45@hawaii.edu

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF LILINOE KAUAHIKAUA TO THE HAWAI'I
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON DRUG ABUSE AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (HACDACS)

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Hearing Date: April 7, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

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

I am writing to offer my strong support of the appointment of **Lilinoe Kauahikaua** to the Hawai'i
Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS).

I have had the honor of knowing Lilinoe for over a decade, and in that time, I have witnessed
her unwavering commitment to community, culture, education, and healing.

Throughout the years, I have seen Lilinoe pour her heart and soul into every endeavor. She is
one of the most dedicated and compassionate individuals I know, always striving to ensure that
the voices of the community are heard. Her ability to create educational programs that are
culturally sensitive and trauma-informed is just one example of the positive impact she can
bring. Whether it's through her leadership in programs like Papa Ola Lōkahi and the 'Ohana
Center of Excellence or her advocacy for better access to culturally relevant care, her focus has
always been on finding solutions that are rooted in the community's strengths and traditions.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, what truly stands out about Lilinoe is her character.
She is grounded, empathetic, and a natural leader who builds trust effortlessly. She has an
exceptional ability to listen, collaborate, and bring people together for a common cause. She
navigates complex issues with grace and integrity, always keeping the well-being of others at the
forefront of her actions.

I believe Lilinoe possesses the unique combination of personal experience, cultural knowledge,
professional expertise, and a genuine passion for community healing that would make her an
invaluable asset to the commission.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathryn Akamine

April 6, 2025

Aloha Senator San Buenaventura and members of the Senate Committee of Health and Human Services,

It is with great honor that I submit this testimony in strong support of the nominee Lilinoe Kauahikaua to be confirmed for the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances.

I've had the privilege of knowing and working alongside Lilinoe in personal, cultural and professional spaces. Her passion for utilizing the values and lifeways of being Kanaka 'Ōiwi in the healing and recovery of all people, and in particular other Native Hawaiians, is powerful and what our communities need now more than ever. She's committed much of her professional life to ensuring that community organizations have the culturally appropriate and resonant tools to create safe and healing spaces. She is also someone who is grounded in community, always talking with people and professionals to get a better understanding of what that specific community needs, understanding that all communities are unique and their members are the experts in their experiences.

I am fully confident that with Lilinoe Kauahikaua's confirmation, the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances would have a member that is willing to do the work necessary to heal our communities and would provide valuable insight to the Governor's administration, legislators such as yourselves, and the community at large.

I encourage you to vote in support of Lilinoe to this position in relation to GM545.

Na'u nō a me ka ha'aha'a,
Ikaika Regidor

GM-545

Submitted on: 4/5/2025 5:23:49 AM

Testimony for HHS on 4/7/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Malia Zimmerman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF LILINOE KAUAHIKAUA TO THE HAWAI'I ADVISORY COMMISSION ON DRUG ABUSE AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES (HACDACS)

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS)

Hearing Date: April 7, 2025

Time: 1:00 PM

Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

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

I am writing in strong support of the appointment of Lilinoe Kauahikaua to the Hawai'i Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDACS). Her commitment to her community and her passion for her work make her an exemplary candidate for this position.

Over the past five years, I have had the privilege of spending time with Lilinoe. She is deeply devoted to her community and works tirelessly to preserve and protect Hawaiian culture. Her efforts have established her as a strong voice for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, advocating for their needs and rights.

Lilinoe's unique qualifications and experience will undoubtedly make a positive impact on HACDACS. Her leadership skills, combined with her cultural insights and advocacy, position her to contribute significantly to the commission's work. She is well-equipped to address the challenges related to drug abuse and controlled substances in Hawai'i, particularly those affecting indigenous communities.

I respectfully urge the committee to confirm Lilinoe Kauahikaua's appointment to HACDACS. Her dedication, experience, and cultural perspective will be invaluable assets to the commission and the communities it serves.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Malia Zimmerman

