

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities?

I am deeply committed to advocating for individuals and families living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Hawai'i, ensuring they have access to equitable and adequate services, resources, and opportunities to have the best possible quality of life.

My commitment to this community comes from a vested interest as a parent and relative, an educator, and as a community advocate.

As a parent of two school-aged children with developmental disabilities and a family member to others living with similar challenges, I have a deeply personal commitment to advocating for individuals and families living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). My experiences navigating the education system, accessing services, and addressing systemic barriers have given me a firsthand understanding of the challenges families face.

In my professional role as a Program Director in the public school system, I work with school and families of with students who have IEPs and 504 plans, ensuring they receive the accommodations and support they need to succeed.

My background also includes experience in policy advocacy through my nonprofit, Infinite Reach ('Apoākea), where I focus on community-based initiatives and advocacy.

Serving on the State Council on Developmental Disabilities would allow me to use my lived experience, professional expertise, and advocacy skills to shape policies that promote inclusion, accessibility, and meaningful support for individuals with I/DD across Hawai'i.

2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities?

The State Council on Developmental Disabilities plays a critical role in advising policymakers, state agencies, and community stakeholders on issues impacting individuals with I/DD. Council members help develop and oversee the State Plan for Developmental Disabilities, advocate for systemic improvements, and ensure that federal and state policies align with the needs of individuals with I/DD and their families.

Additionally, Council members collaborate with agencies such as the Department of Health, the Department of Education, and the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) to promote self-advocacy, independent living, and access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. The Council must also ensure that historically underserved communities—including rural and Native Hawaiian populations—are included in statewide efforts to improve services and supports.

3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities as a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, why do you believe that you are qualified for the position?

I am uniquely qualified for this position because of my combined lived experience as a parent and family member of individuals with developmental disabilities, my professional expertise in education and program management, and my leadership in community advocacy.

- **Personal Experience:** As a parent of two children with developmental disabilities, I have firsthand knowledge of navigating the special education system, accessing services, and advocating for inclusive policies.
- **Professional Experience:** As a Program Director in the public school system, I work with schools and families of students who have IEPs and 504 plans, ensuring they receive the accommodations and support they need to succeed through equitable access to educational opportunities and compliance with federal and state mandates.
- **Policy & Advocacy Expertise:** Through my nonprofit, Infinite Reach ('Apoākea), I provide direct support to families, awareness programs, and public testimony at the Hawai'i State Legislature, focusing on issues related to I/DD, rural development, food systems, and Native Hawaiian rights - which are underserved areas directly related to or impacting the ID/D community.

This diverse background allows me to bring both a systems-level perspective and an intimate understanding of the day-to-day challenges faced by individuals with I/DD and their families.

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

During my term on the Council, I aim to:

- **Improve Access to Services** for individuals with I/DD across the State of Hawai'i, particularly in rural and underserved communities.
- **Strengthen Special Education & Transition Services** by advocating for policies that improve IEP and 504 Plan development & implementation, increase family engagement, and ensure smooth transitions from school to postsecondary opportunities.
- **Promote Culturally Responsive Approaches** that recognize the unique needs of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander families within the I/DD community.
- **Enhance Legislative Advocacy & Public Awareness** to ensure that the needs of individuals with I/DD are at the forefront of policy discussions in Hawai'i.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and how these qualities will benefit the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

- **Passionate:** My personal and professional experiences fuel my deep commitment to advocating for individuals with I/DD and their families.
- **Collaborative:** I have extensive experience working with schools, families, government agencies, and community organizations to develop policies and programs that create positive change.
- **Strategic:** My background in program management and advocacy enables me to approach challenges with long-term planning and solution-oriented thinking.

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

Without question, my experience as a parent and relative of individuals with ID/D will be most beneficial as a member of this Council. In my opinion, the purview of a parent-advocate is only second to that of a self-advocate. Having an understanding and lifelong investment in the quality of life and care of a loved one provides one with the experiences necessary to provide critical perspective where others may only have a superficial understanding.

Specifically, my two children are working toward a level of independence, each with their own unique strengths and challenges, but they will both require lifelong support in the form of guardianship. I have been a contributing member of the Guardianship Uniform Law Working Group, which has allowed me to (1.) provide a parent (and community) perspective on the challenges and needs of families requiring and seeking guardianship in care of their loved ones and (2.) learn more about the barriers, needs, and inner workings of the systems involved in the various guardianship processes. Through this experience, I have a more diverse understanding of the challenges, needs, and processes for guardianship (and conservatorship) which affect the greater ID/D and disabilities communities, and I believe that to be beneficial for me as a member of the Council serving in the best interest of the ID/D community.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the State Council on Developmental Disabilities? How would you overcome conflicts of interest?

Given my professional role in the public school system, there may be potential for perceived conflicts of interest when discussing policies related to education services for students with I/DD. However, I would address this by fully disclosing any potential conflicts, recusing myself from decisions where a direct conflict exists, and ensuring that my advocacy efforts remain centered on the best interests of individuals with I/DD statewide, rather than any single institution or program.

Additionally, I would adhere to all ethical guidelines and transparency protocols set forth by the Council to maintain the integrity of my role as a member.



**STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
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March 24, 2025

The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator San Buenaventura, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: GM 606 - State Council on Developmental Disabilities Gubernatorial Nominee
Brandi-Lynn Hyden

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **STRONGLY SUPPORTS GM 606** to confirm the nomination of Brandi-Lynn Hyden for a term to expire June 30, 2028.

The Council's Federal mandate (P.L. 106-402) is clear in determining the composition of this body to ensure that all the players involved in the development, implementation, and use of DD supports are represented. The law specifically requires each Council shall include representatives of relevant State entities, including State entities that administer funds provided under Federal laws related to individuals with disabilities.

Brandi-Lynn Hyden is a parent to children with developmental disabilities. Her appointment to the Council fulfills the Federal requirement of parents serving on the Council. Ms. Hyden has shown to be a strong advocate for parents of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her perspective as a parent and community member has been helpful in our Guardianship/Conservatorship working group, and we believe this same passion and perspective will be appreciated on our Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our **strong support for GM 606** to confirm Brandi-Lynn Hyden to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

GM-606

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 4:16:15 PM

Testimony for HHS on 3/24/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hawaii Self Advocacy Advisory Council	Testifying for Hawaii Self-Advocacy Advisory Council	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Self-advocacy advisory council stands in support of Brandi-Lynn Hyden on GM606.