

Amelia Dudley
Office Manager
Office of Sen. Joy A Sen Buenaventura
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 213
Honolulu, HI 96813

February 8, 2025

Re: Responses for Nomination to the Language Access Advisory Council

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Language Access Advisory Council?

With 23 years of experience as a Public Health Nurse, I have worked extensively with limited-English-proficient (LEP) communities, helping them to navigate health services. My firsthand experience has shown me the challenges LEP individuals face in accessing essential services.

After retiring from the Department of Health (DOH), I founded the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center in 2011 to provide in-language support for students and adults in the Waipahu area. My work has reinforced my belief that language access is critical in areas such as education, healthcare, housing and employment.

Hawaii's language access laws are essential, given that one in nine residents has limited English proficiency. I am passionate about improving resources for Hawaii's diverse communities and believe that my experience working with the Migrant Micronesian community will enable me to offer valuable guidance to the Council, ensuring the effectiveness of the state's Language Access Plan.

2. What do you perceive to be the roles and responsibilities of a member of the Language Access Council?

A primary role of a Council member is to evaluate, advise and enhance the State's Language Access Plan, ensuring its effective implementation across agencies serving the public.

Additionally, Council members should:

- Advocate for improvements if services are inadequate
- Support training initiatives for interpreters and translators to expand the pool of qualified professionals in Hawaii.
- Collaborate with state agencies to ensure compliance with language access laws.

3. Given your understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a Language Access Advisory Council member, why do you believe that you are qualified for this position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the board.

I have extensive experience working with LEP communities, in public health and in my current role as the Director of Waipahu Safe Haven Center. As a Public Health Nurse for 23 years, I developed health promotion initiatives for Micronesian communities in the Leeward area, including outreach and education for the Hansen's Disease Community Program.

Additionally, I collaborated with the University of Hawaii's Interpretation and Translation Studies Program to train 13 Micronesian interpreters who were bilingual in Chuukese, Marshallese, Palauan, and Pohnpeian languages. These interpreters are actively serving their communities.

I also chaired the Nations of Micronesian Community Committee at the Department of Health bringing together statewide stakeholders from health, labor, government and non-profits to bridge an understanding of the Micronesian community and develop partnerships with Micronesian groups to support the challenges they were facing including Language Access.

Through my current work at Waipahu Safe Haven Center, I remain deeply connected to the LEP community. My expertise, leadership and advocacy make me well suited to contribute effectively to the Council.

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

During this term of service, I aim to:

- provide oversight and recommendations to the Language Access plan for state agency.
- Enhance community outreach by supporting the Office of Language Access in becoming more visible and accessible.
- Expand interpreter and translator training programs addressing the critical shortage of qualified professional interpreters.

By leveraging my experience, I hope to ensure that Hawaii's LEP populations receive equitable access to vital services.

5. Name three qualities that describe you and how these qualities will benefit the Language Access Advisory Council.

- Commitment to the Community, I am dedicated in advocating for LEP populations and working collaboratively to enhance language access services.
- Team-Oriented Approach-I have experience working across multiple sectors, including schools, non-profits, and government agencies.
- Passion for partnership- I believe in collaborative solutions to ensure inclusive, language-accessible services.

These qualities will allow me to effectively contribute to the Council's mission and work productively with fellow members.

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

During the COVID-19 Pandemic our Waipahu Community and other Migrant and Immigrant communities faced urgent challenges in accessing in-language health information quarantine guidance, and essential resources. Our interpreters received numerous requests from individuals seeking assistance with quarantine protocols, unemployment benefits and food access. Recognizing the critical need for language access, we collaborated with the Consulate Offices to stream in-language information on radio shows and on their social media platforms. We also organized food drives and distributed in-language information to 14,000 immigrant and migrant families via their food boxes. During Maui's wildfires, we partnered with the Marshallese Community Organization of Hawaii, Pacific Gateway, Office of Language Access and the People's Fund to coordinate emergency interpreter deployment to Maui. For the Maui response we successfully mobilized 17 Micronesian interpreters into Maui ensuring that affected families could access relief services.

This experience underscored the importance of language access in crisis response, and I am committed to strengthening Hawaii's preparedness in this area.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interest that could arise during your service on the Language Access Council?

I do not foresee any possible conflicts of interest however, if a potential conflict arises, I will recuse myself from discussions or decision making on that matter.



**Parents And
Children Together**
BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIPS
THAT MATTER MOST

ParentsAndChildrenTogether.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF GM 647

TO: Chair San Buenaventura, Vice-Chair Aquino, & Members
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
FROM: Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO
DATE: February 19, 2025 at 1:00 PM

Parents and Children Together (PACT) supports GM 647, the gubernatorial nomination of Barbara Tom to the Language Access Advisory Council. Barbara is a passionate supporter of immigrant communities, serving for many years as a public health nurse and frequent community partner of PACT. Her leadership in building the capacity of social service, health, and education providers to better serve Micronesian communities has been invaluable. Her many years of experience advocating for language access will bring valuable insight to the Council.

Founded in 1968, PACT is a statewide community-based organization providing a wide array of innovative and educational social services to families in need. Assisting more than 15,000 people across the state annually, we help identify, address, and successfully resolve challenges through our 20 programs. Among our services are early education programs, domestic violence prevention and intervention programs, child abuse prevention and intervention programs, childhood sexual abuse supportive group services, child and adolescent behavioral health programs, sex trafficking intervention, poverty prevention and community building programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me at (808) 847-3285 or rkusumoto@pacthawaii.org if you have any questions.

GM-647

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:34:09 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liza Ryan Gill	Testifying for Hawaii Coalition for Immigrant Rights	Support	In Person

Comments:

As the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights it is my pleasure to support, wholeheartedly, the nomination of Barbara Tom. As the leader and Executive Director of Waipahu Safe Haven, her commitment to limited-English Proficient communities has stood the test of time. She continue to raise the issues that most impact vulnerable migrant and immigrant communities and support the critical services that make our state strong.



Statement Before The
Wednesday, February 19, 2025
1:00 PM
Conference Room 225 & Videoconference

in consideration of
GM647

**SUBMITTING FOR CONSIDERATION AND CONFIRMATION TO THE LANGUAGE ACCESS
ADVISORY COUNCIL, GUBERNATORIAL NOMINEE, BARBARA TOM,
FOR A TERM TO EXPIRE 06-30-2028.**

Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair AQUINO and Members of the
Senate Health and Human Services Committee

The Legal Clinic (TLC) supports Gubernatorial Nominee, Barabara Tom, for the Language Access Advisory Council (LAAC).

TLC is a Hawai'i nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. TLC is a direct legal services provider, representing those in Hawai'i who meet income eligibility guidelines without regard to immigration status, national origin, ethnic background, race, religion, ideology, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, or disability. TLC works alongside immigrants so they can attain authorization to work and live with dignity, reunite with their families after years of separation and escape horrific violence to find refuge in the United States. TLC recognizes that every person needs and deserves to feel a sense of trust, welcome, and belonging.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Hawai'i is the most diverse state in the nation.¹ In 2023, Hawai'i had about 256,000 immigrants, which is approx. 18% of the State population.² The top countries of origin for immigrants were the Philippines (45 percent of immigrants), China (9 percent), Japan (8 percent), Korea (6 percent), and the Pacific Island Nations (4 percent).³

¹ See <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/567625-hawaii-california-and-nevada-are-most-diverse-states-in-the-us-census/> (retrieved 1/14/2025).

² See <https://usafacts.org/answers/how-many-immigrants-are-in-the-us/state/hawaii/> and <https://data.census.gov/profile/Hawaii?g=040XX00US15#populations-and-people> (retrieved 1/14/2025).

³ See https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/immigrants_in_hawaii.pdf (retrieved 1/14/2025).

There are between 41,000 -50,500 undocumented immigrants in Hawai'i.⁴ Hawaii is the only state where undocumented women (55%) outnumber men.⁵

The work of the LAAC -- providing input on: implementation and compliance with Hawai'i's language access laws; the quality of oral and written language services provided under the law; and the adequacy of a state agency or covered entity's dissemination and training of its employees likely to have contact with Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons, its policies and procedures for language services, its competency in working effectively with in-person and telephone interpreters, and its understanding of the dynamics of interpretation between clients, providers, and interpreters⁶ -- is integral to the work of TLC. TLC cannot fully and effectively support our immigrant and migrant communities without LAAC.

Thus, TLC supports Gubernatorial Nominee, Barbara Tom, for LAAC. Ms. Tom is currently serving as a LAAC councilmember. LAAC and the public will benefit from Ms. Tom's institutional knowledge and expertise. If you have questions of me, please contact me at sma@tlchawaii.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma

Sandy Ma
Community & Policy Advocate
The Legal Clinic

⁴⁴ See <https://www.civilbeat.org/2024/12/data-dive-hawai%CA%BBi-deportation-cases-hit-quarter-century-high/> (retrieved 1/14/2025).

⁵⁵ See <https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Narratives/Overview/a0ac94c0-8538-417e-85c9-da6ac5c06603> (retrieved 1/14/2025).

⁶ See <https://health.hawaii.gov/ola/meet-the-council/> (retrieved 2/18/2025).

GM-647

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 12:51:48 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
amy agbayani	Testifying for Hawai'i Friends of Civil Rights	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Testimony in strong support of Barbara Tom

submitted by Amy Agbayani, co-chair Hawaii' Friends of Civil Rights

I strongly support Barbara Tom's nomination to the OLA board. I have had many opportunities to work with her on many immigrant community issues. Her community work is of special importance because of her strong ties to the COFA Pacific island communities. She understands language barriers and helps many limited English communities.

Please approve her nomination to OLA because she has the expertise, experience and values that supports OLA's mission.

Amy Agbayani

To: The Honorable Joy A. San Buenaventura, Chair
The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

From: Paula Arcena, External Affairs Vice President
Mike Nguyen, Public Policy Manager
Sarielyn Curtis, External Affairs Specialist

Hearing: Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 1:00 PM, Conference Room 225

RE: **GM647 Consideration and confirmation to the Language Access Advisory Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, BARBARA TOM, for a term to expire 06-30-2028.**

AlohaCare appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of the confirmation of Barbara Tom as a member of the Language Access Advisory Council.**

Founded in 1994 by Hawai'i's community health centers, AlohaCare is a community-rooted, non-profit health plan serving over 70,000 Medicaid and dual-eligible health plan members on all islands. Approximately 37 percent of our members are keiki. We are Hawai'i's only health plan exclusively dedicated to serving Medicaid and Medicaid-Medicare dually-eligible beneficiaries. Our mission is to serve individuals and communities in the true spirit of aloha by ensuring and advocating for access to quality, whole-person care for all.

AlohaCare serves many limited-English proficient community members needed language access. We have had the privilege of participating in the Hawai'i Coalition for Immigrant Rights where we have had the pleasure of working with Ms. Tom, a fellow coalition member. She is a leader in improving language access, particularly for the Micronesian community. Currently, Ms. Tom directs the Waipahu Safe Haven Immigrant/Migrant Resource Center, which she founded in 2012. Through the Center and other community roles, she continues to advocate for and support the Pacific Island community with holistic language access programs. For these reasons and more, we think Ms. Tom is uniquely qualified to serve on the Language Access Advisory Council.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify in **support of the confirmation of of Barbara Tom as a member of the Language Access Advisory Council.**

LATE

GM-647

Submitted on: 2/18/2025 1:25:12 PM

Testimony for HHS on 2/19/2025 1:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aphirak Bamrungruan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My name is Aphirak Bamrungruan, and I served as Executive Director for the Office of Language Access from 2017 to 2024. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Barbara Tom's re-appointment to the Language Access Advisory Council. During my tenure, I had the honor and privilege of working with Ms. Tom both in her capacity as a Language Access Advisory Council member and as a dedicated community leader. She has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to language access and advocacy for diverse communities. Her experience and dedication to ensuring equitable communication for individuals with limited English proficiency make her an invaluable asset to the council. With her expertise and passion, I am confident that she will continue to contribute meaningfully to advancing language access policies and improving services for all. I respectfully urge her confirmation to this important role.

Respectfully submitted,

Aphirak Bamrungruan