

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 4:54:31 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Page Ogata	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford for the position of Circuit Court judge. I have known Taryn since 2011, and I have known her to be hard-working, intelligent, kind, and always willing to lend a hand. In addition to being an attorney, Taryn is a wife, mother, and proud Kamehameha Schools graduate. She will be an asset to the bench.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/15/2025 12:53:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Salina Kanai	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in full support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford for appointment to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Taryn in both a professional and personal capacity for over two decades, when I first moved back to Hawai'i to be a state public defender in 2004. She was a very seasoned attorney then, and she taught me a great deal about the importance of public defense work. It is no easy thing to be a public defender for as long of a time as she has, and I understand that she is a supervisor at the office now as well. Being a public defender forces you to juggle many balls at once and to triage difficult clients, cases and circumstances under pressure. These qualities that make Taryn a great public defender will translate into her being a great judge. While I recognize that her civil background is limited, Taryn is a quick learner. She would not have a difficult time learning areas of law new to her.

We are in a time when the very idea of due process for the weakest and most vulnerable members of our communities is under attack. It is more important now than ever that we have folks on the bench who understand what it's like to do a trial, to represent a human being, and who understand and respect the importance of the rule of law. Taryn would be an excellent addition to the bench.

Thank you for attention to my comments.

Ryan Tomasa
1421 Luinakoa St.
Honolulu Hawaii 96821

To whom it may concern:

I write this letter in support of my sister Taryn Gifford's application for a 1st Circuit Court judgeship.

I believe she is well qualified for the position as she has worked as an attorney at the Public Defender's office for a number of years. She has developed a well rounded legal career by working as a both a trial and appellate attorney. I know she is a hard worker as she started her legal career by working as a paralegal and putting herself through law school.

Throughout her life, I have known Taryn to be a high integrity person. She holds herself and her family to a very high standard. I have known her her entire life and cannot remember a single incident of questionable behavior.

If hired, I believe my sister will become a good judge because she will want to step up and reach your standard. Additionally, she will be held to that high standard by her friends and colleagues. Finally, Taryn certainly will not "screw up" in front of family.

If you have any questions or need further information please feel free to call me at (808) 673-1485.

Sincerely yours,

Ryan Tomasa

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/16/2025 2:51:20 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Bott	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

This letter is in support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford and her nomination to be a judge assigned to the First Circuit Court on Oahu. I have known and worked with Mrs. Tomasa Gifford for several years since I started with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Hawaii Paroling Authority in 2007. In my position of being a Parole Officer, I have direct working experience with Mrs. Tomasa as she has represented parolees under my supervision who have been arrested and placed back into custody for parole violations. While there are times when we are on opposite sides of these violations, her professional performance is to be commended. She has great insight in how to represent her parole violation clients and shows excellent judgment when defending them. While she recognizes that some of the violations are severe and really have no defense, (i.e. new criminal convictions, admission to substance use, failure to complete treatment etc.) she is not afraid to point out and defend her clients when she sees discrepancies in other violations or the actions of parole officers. She is very cordial, professional and will always ask questions before coming to a conclusion or to dispute violations. She will also defend her clients even when the violations are clear cut but the parolees still want to dispute them. There are other interactions where I had the opportunity to work and assist her not only with parole violations but with other areas of parole, (i.e. parole interstate compact, parole consideration, and housing). She is always personable and a very friendly and caring person. She sees the best in people but realizes those instances where individuals do need to be held accountable for their violations and actions. These traits will serve her and the State of Hawaii well should she be confirmed to become a judge. Given her professional and personal demeanor, she will be a great asset to the court should she be confirmed for the judgeship as well. In closing, I would like to note that this recommendation comes as a personal and professional one but in no way am I speaking for or representing the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation or the Hawaii Paroling Authority. Please feel free to contact me at 808-587-1313 or robert.j.bott@hawaii.gov for any questions or concerns or if you need further assistance regarding this recommendation letter. Thank you.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/16/2025 8:16:29 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kimberly Murakami	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write to provide my strongest endorsement and recommendation that Ms. Gifford be confirmed by the Senate as a Circuit Court Judge.

I have known Ms. Gifford since 1995 when we met at the William S. Richardson School of Law. We were fast friends and belonged to the same study group. We have been social and professional friends ever since.

Ms. Gifford is a strong public servant and has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the public and our individual liberties. She has handled dozens of criminal trials and appeals and is responsible for many appellate decisions which shape the procedural and substantive criminal law.

Having known Ms. Gifford for thirty years, I am confident that as a judge she will be fair, neutral, and smart with her rulings.

Thank you, Kimberly Murakami

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 10:10:14 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Aubrey Bento	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford's appointment. I have worked with Taryn for almost four years as a Deputy Public Defender. In those four years, I have gotten to know Taryn well as a colleague and friend. Taryn has a brilliant legal mind and I often go to her for advice on complex legal issues. Taryn is always available to advise me on my cases and support me in my practice. As a public defender, Taryn has served our community with kindness and empathy, both qualities that will serve her well as a judge. I am incredibly honored and proud to support Taryn's appointment and I know that she has the intelligence, temperament, and leadership skills to excel as a Circuit Court Judge. Thank you for considering my testimony.

17 April 2025

GM 789

Testimony in Support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford's confirmation as
Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court for the First Circuit (Island of O'ahu).

Dear Committee on the Judiciary,

I support Governor Green's nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the First
Circuit Court and urge you to confirm her as Circuit Court Judge.

Taryn is thoroughly qualified for the position. She is a dedicated public servant of
well over two decades, who grew up here, graduated from Kamehameha Schools,
and attended the University of Hawai'i for both her undergraduate studies and her
law degree. She also clerked for the late John S.W. Lim, both when he sat as a trial
judge and as an appellate judge.

Taryn has spent the majority of her career at the state public defender's office. She
has some civil experience as well, which she gained both as a law clerk and while
working a year at a civil law firm. She is quick to adjust to new positions that
require her to learn new things and skills, as her adjustment to her supervisory
positions has proven. Her work at the state public defender's office has been
extensive. Over the years, she has tried numerous cases before judges and juries in
both the district and family courts. She has routinely handled parole matters before
the Hawaii Paroling Authority and involuntary commitment proceedings. She has
worked extensively as an appellate attorney, both briefing and orally arguing
appellate cases. She has been the District Court Supervisor and, recently, has
become the Appellate Section Supervisor. With her supervisory positions she has
gained valuable experience as an administrator and supervisor of others. Her time
as District Court Supervisor was especially valuable, because it involved her in all
the various different specialty courts. She also often prepares and provides
testimony in legislative hearings, and has attended conferences and other training,
all well-trod soil that she will bring with her to the circuit court.

It would be hard to overstate Taryn's integrity to the law and moral courage. She has devoted her career to standing up for and protecting the rights of those most in need. She has also frequently volunteered her time to others at various clinics over the years. She absorbed much of Judge Lim's sensibilities and has striven mindfully to live up to the ideals he so ably embodied. Her devotion to working on behalf of the indigent speaks to her compassion and wisdom, as does each brief she has written over the decades. She would give the same kind of devotion to doing what is right and what the law requires as a circuit court judge.

Although she has spent her career being an advocate for others, Taryn will readily settle into the role of a judge. She listens with care to others and weighs varying interests fairly to reach a just result. Judge Lim instilled a respect for caselaw that she has never cast aside and I've never known her to distort a troublesome case or issue rather than address it straight on. And her decades of experience have given her a pragmatic understanding of Hawaii's courts of all levels and how they work day in and day out, both behind the scenes and in the public eye. And neither health nor financial matters give any pause for concern.

Taryn is ideally suited for the position to which the Governor has nominated her. The deep familiarity with all the structural and institutional interests involved, which her decades of varied experience have instilled within her, makes her especially suited to sit on the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Respectfully,

James S. Gifford (HSBA 7276)
Assistant Federal Defender

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 12:44:03 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/22/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
audrey stanley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Taryn Tomasa is smart, humble, dedicated, and respectful. She has the qualities and characteristics of an excellent judge. I recommend her appointment.