

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 4:35:44 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dawn Kurisu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of Wilson Unga, a judicial nominee for the District and Family Courts of the First Circuit Court.

Wilson is a man of integrity and honesty and who has a deep commitment to the people and place of Hawaii. In all his work and his various community roles, he strives to make things better than he found them. In his professional career he has always sought to uphold the law and I have every confidence that he would bring the highest level of impartiality, thoughtful and thorough assessment, and sound judgement to his role as a judge in the First Circuit Court if given the opportunity. Not only is he capable and competent in his skills as an attorney, he also is a person of sound character and has served as a role-model for youth and peers alike. He is also kind-hearted and seeks to bring out the best in others around him, which would serve him well as continues to balance protecting the law, people, human rights, and our communities at large. Wilson's experience coupled with his character make him an ideal judicial nominee. He would be a respectable and fair judge and is without a doubt also respected in his craft and decision making.

It a deep honor to know Wilson and to see that he has the opportunity to expand his contributions to our community in ever more meaningful ways. I know that regardless of the outcome of this nomination, he will continue to do so with a heart and commitment that is second to none. He is the kind of person whom you can trust and can rely upon. It is with great pleasure that I lend my full support to his judicial nomination.

Respectfully,
Dawn Kurisu

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/14/2025 6:16:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Kaohu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Chair and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am honored to submit this written testimony in strong support of the nomination of Wilson A. Unga to the District Court of the First Circuit. As an individual who has had the privilege of working with Mr. Unga and observing his leadership and legal skills, I am confident that he will be an outstanding addition to the bench.

Wilson A. Unga is not only a dedicated attorney, but also a strong and inspirational community leader. His tireless commitment to public service has made a profound impact on the lives of those in our community. He possesses the rare combination of legal expertise, community awareness, and an unwavering commitment to fairness and justice. In his role as the Division Chief of the Felony Prosecution Division at the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Mr. Unga has demonstrated exceptional leadership and an unwavering dedication to justice. Under his leadership, the division has thrived, and his ability to handle complex felony cases with integrity and precision is a testament to his deep legal knowledge. His work overseeing critical cases speaks to his keen understanding of the law, his ability to manage teams effectively, and his ability to make tough decisions in the pursuit of justice.

What truly distinguishes Wilson Unga, however, is his humility and work ethic. Despite his impressive achievements, he remains grounded, approachable, and always willing to help others. He leads with compassion, striving to serve others first and foremost. His humility and personable nature make him a trusted and respected figure in the legal community. Whether working with his colleagues, law enforcement, or community members, Mr. Unga always approaches his work with the utmost professionalism and respect.

In addition to his legal acumen and leadership abilities, Wilson Unga is an individual who embodies the values of fairness, dedication, and integrity. His passion for the law, his commitment to justice, and his ability to empathize with others make him uniquely qualified to serve as a judge. I have no doubt that he will approach every case with the same diligence, fairness, and compassion that have characterized his work throughout his legal career.

In conclusion, Wilson A. Unga is a highly qualified, experienced, and capable individual who would serve the District Court of the First Circuit with distinction. His strong community leadership, extensive legal knowledge, humility, hardworking nature, and personable demeanor

make him an outstanding nominee. I wholeheartedly support his confirmation and encourage the Senate Judiciary Committee to confirm him for this important judicial position.

Mele F. Pepa

10481 Crest Haven Court
South Jordan, UT 84095
thesanfts05@gmail.com
385.222.8289

April 16, 2025

To Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am Mele Pepa. A resident of Utah, I am a student at the University of Utah studying Family, Community, and Human Development. I am writing to express my full support for my cousin, Wilson A. Unga, who has recently been appointed as a District Family Court Judge.

As someone who has known Wilson both personally and professionally for many years, I can speak to his integrity, compassion, and strong sense of justice. He is someone who leads with fairness, listens with empathy, and holds himself to the highest ethical standards. His commitment to serving families and the community makes him exceptionally well-suited for this important role. I've seen that as I've witnessed at a young age his achievements from the small town of Kahuku to prestigious Georgetown University and returning home to help the people that helped him.

I have witnessed Wilson's great achievements and his triumphs through the hardships of life . What a privilege it is for the state of Hawaii to have someone as such on the bench. Someone of such humble beginnings, great experiences and wisdom. Someone who was so influential on my siblings and me that we all carried on into higher education.

During my time here at the University of Utah I've learned of unfairness, and discrepancies that come from manmade systems. No system is perfect, but what a great way to make it better by adding someone such as Wilson A. Unga.

With mine own eyes from my childhood, through my adolescence, and my entire adulthood, I can say with confidence that Wilson has always approached life with humility, wisdom, and a deep respect for others. I have no doubt that these qualities will continue to guide him on the bench and make a meaningful impact on the families he serves.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
Mele Fatai Pepa

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mele Fatai Pepa', with a stylized, flowing script.

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/16/2025 7:27:02 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alison Faleolo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

ALOHA Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A .Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Though I know Wilson as a contributing member of our Kahuku community, I have the privilege of having his middle child in my 5th grade class this 2024 - 2025 school year. His child has excellent attendance, is a leader among peers, takes responsibility for learning, and is strongly supported by parents that encourage and show up.

It is common to see Wilson, his wife, his children, and extended family attending school events that celebrate his children (ie. Super Raider assemblies), that support the school (ie. Halloween Festival, School Fundraisers), and that encourage family time (ie. Sweetheart Luncheon).

This past weekend, Wilson and his family attended the Ko'olauloa Battle of the Books competition, where two of his children were participating. During part of the competition, his youngest child, was too afraid to participate in the last round. Seeing her being consoled by teammates, teachers, and even a sibling, he quietly came and sat by her. With his arm around her, he simply sat with her and supported her by being present.

That quiet, yet meaningful act of being present for those who need support, is just one example of who Wilson Unga is, and what Wilson Unga will do as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Mrs. Alison Faleolo

Kahuku Elementary School - 5th grade teacher

Imiloa Borland

From: Robin Maiava <rmaiava@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2025 8:17 AM
To: JDC Committee
Subject: Wilson A. 'Unga

You don't often get email from rmaiava@msn.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

April 17, 2025

To: Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: JC 30-Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. 'Unga for District Family Court Judge, First Circuit

From: Robin K Maiava

I am writing regarding my support for Wilson A. 'Unga. I have known Wilson personally since the day he was born. I am Wilson's aunt.

Wilson was raised in a loving home with a younger sister and wonderful parents that provided all the necessities and opportunities that they could offer him. Throughout the years Wilson has shown a strong commitment to his family, education and community.

One way that Wilson served his community was through the Boy Scouts program where he did multiple service projects as well as a community based Eagle project completing all requirements to earn the prestigious Eagle Scout award.

Some of the qualities that I appreciate about Wilson are that he has always been kind, compassionate, even tempered, honest and reliable. Wilson has always been very supportive of his family and friends. I can also vouch for Wilson's integrity. Throughout the years he has displayed integrity. I see that trait in the way he honors his parents, respects his sister and is raising happy and healthy children.

Lastly, I'd like to share an experience I had with Wilson on the day he married his wife, Sunny. I stood in the background as Wilson and Sunny made a very important decision in their lives, a commitment to each other. Wilson displayed all the characteristics that I've always known him to possess and was very pleased to see that Wilson was marrying a woman with similar attributes and traits.

I am in support of Wilson's confirmation. I know he will fully commit to this position.

I appreciate your time.

Sincerely,

Robin K. Maiava

College of Humanities and
Social Sciences
Department of Criminal Justice
Moana, Hafoka, Ph.D.
(435)879-4430
Moana.hafoka@utahtech.edu

April 17, 2025

Judiciary Committee, Hawai'i State Senate
415 South Beretania St.
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Chair Rhodes and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

It is with the utmost pleasure that I write this letter of support on behalf of Deputy Prosecuting Attorney, Wilson Unga. I have known Mr. Unga for almost four decades. We attended Kahuku Elementary, and graduated together from Kahuku High school in 2002. I am delighted to provide this testament to his leadership skills and character that well predict him an excellent fit as a judge for the District Court of the First Circuit and the District Family Court of the First Circuit.

Forgive me, Chair Rhodes and members of the committee for the casualness but I would like to refer to Mr. Unga in this letter by his first name, Wilson, as it evokes many memories that will help me explain why I think he is the perfect person for the judgeship. When I heard the news last month that Wilson was a judicial nominee I was overjoyed, but not entirely surprised. If there is anyone who I know personally that is fit to become a judge, it would be Wilson. I believe that a judge must possess characteristics such as intelligence, integrity, compassion, and being well-versed.

Wilson's resume is decorated with examples of his intelligence. He led us as young men growing up in Kahuku by example, excelling in his classes, and being accepted to the Georgetown University. Wilson was a recipient of the Lumana'i Scholarship in 2002, one our community is proud of because he represented his Samoan roots in higher education. When he graduated from Georgetown, a few of us friends flew out to Washington D.C. because he represented us and our little town at a prestigious university. Reciprocity is instilled in this man; as a Chairman of the Lumana'i Scholarship Committee, he embodies the mantra, "give back to the community". Even with the intelligence he possesses, he is humble and serves his community with love.

A judge must be honest and transparent. Wilson is a man of integrity. He means what he says, and says what he means. I think this is at the core of Wilson's being, and why he is so respected in the community. He communicates honestly, and values relationships.

Wilson is well-versed. In high school he was involved in so many extra-curricular activities including our student body government, band, multiple clubs and events. A club he was

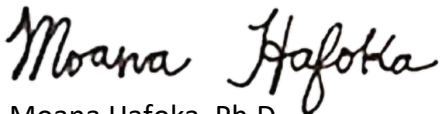
a part of was the Red Cross Club. I remember this particularly because he recruited me to a meeting and assisted in some of the club events and service projects in the community. One event in specific Wilson participated in was the Model UN. There weren't too many Pacific Islander boys participating, so this was a new experience for me and several other boys. At first it was intimidating, but Wilson was such a blessing because he was able to be a bridge for us and connect us with other people, explain to us the procedures, and make us feel welcome in this overwhelming event. I share with you these things, Judiciary Committee, because these activities and interests allow him to connect with so many people. It is rare for an individual to have the intelligence and experience to be a deputy prosecutor coupled with the interests and experience in surfing, running, cultural responsibilities and most importantly the ethics and temperament that Wilson possesses. He is a walking example of being well-versed.

As indicated in his resume, Wilson's knowledge and experience is remarkable as a nominee for the judgeship. You may have a rubric or formula in determining his experience in the courtroom, but I hope that I am able to highlight the person that he is beyond the courtroom. In his hometown, he still serves as a volunteer overseeing young single adults in our church, and in so many other capacities.

For these reasons, I know that Wilson Unga will be a wonderful asset as a judge in the First Circuit. He is productive, an active member of the community, and a dedicated learner, one our community and state can be proud of. Senate Judiciary Committee, I hope you will consider him in one of the judges in Hawai'i.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Mr. Wilson Unga as a judicial nominee, please do not hesitate to contact me at moana.hafoka@utahtech.edu or my cell: (808)227-4327.

Sincerely,



Moana Hafoka, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice
Department of Criminal Justice
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84790

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:36:00 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephen Fabiano	Testifying for Fia Care	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have had the privilege of knowing Wilson Unga as my cousin for many years, and throughout our relationship, he has consistently demonstrated remarkable character, integrity, and dedication. Wilson has always exemplified compassion, fairness, and an unwavering commitment to justice, traits that I am confident will make him an exceptional Family Court Judge.

In both personal and professional interactions, Wilson consistently shows sound judgment, respect for all individuals, and a deep understanding of the profound impact family law decisions have on people's lives. His thoughtful demeanor, coupled with his extensive legal experience and genuine empathy for families navigating challenging circumstances, uniquely qualifies him for this important judicial role.

I wholeheartedly endorse Wilson Unga's confirmation and respectfully urge the committee to approve his appointment.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Stephen Fabiano

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 8:42:14 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Viliami Piutau	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my support for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as District Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

Mr. Unga is a highly qualified, dedicated, and compassionate legal professional who has demonstrated unwavering commitment to justice and public service throughout his career. His experience in family law, deep understanding of the challenges faced by Hawaii's families, and proven integrity make him exceptionally suited for this important role.

Mr. Unga is known for his humility, fairness, and deep respect for the people and communities he serves. He brings not only legal expertise but also cultural awareness and empathy - qualities that are critical in family court, where decisions often deeply impact the lives of children and families.

I am confident Mr. Unga will serve with the utmost professionalism and will uphold the values and responsibilities entrusted to our judiciary. His confirmation would be a meaningful step toward strengthening our courts and supporting families in the First Circuit.

Thank you for your consideration.

April 17, 2025

RE: JC 30-Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A Unga for Family District Court Judge

Chair Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

It is my sincere pleasure to recommend Wilson Unga for the position of District Family Court Judge.

I have known Wilson since he was a precocious child who always stood out from the crowd.

Notwithstanding his rare intelligence, what really sets him apart is his judgement and his warmth.

Wilson always sees the big picture and understands the importance of human relationships. I have never known Wilson to be an ideologue, but rather a genuine pragmatist.

In the considerable amount of time that I have spent in his company, I have never observed Wilson arguing with anyone. I have never seen him visibly angry, even when you knew he had to be upset. I have never heard him vent, hyperbolize, or criticize.

His arresting smile and warmth brighten the world for everyone who has the pleasure of his company.

As a judge he will undoubtedly exercise extraordinary insight, patience, and erudition in his competent and comprehensive application of the law.

He enjoys my wholehearted support and commendation.

Warmest Regards,

Cory Fabiano

Chief Technology Officer

Cúratús, LLC

5252 Edgewood Dr

Suite 165

Provo, UT 8460

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 11:03:46 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael Lau	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

To Chair Rhoads and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,**For: Wilson Unga**

I strongly support the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga as a family court judge of the First Circuit. My name is Michael Lau, I have been teaching High School Speech, Debate, and Drama for the last 17 years. I currently teach at Kahuku High and Intermediate School. I have known Wilson since we were young boys as neighbors, peers, and friends.

I am two years older than Wilson and when I was just beginning my teen years I often went over to his house to play games in their home. I distinctly remember playing a kind of soccer-like game on their porch. Even from such a young age Wilson has always been generous with his things, his ideas, and his time. I remember him adjudicating disagreements from even those childhood days.

As we went into high school we were both on the speech and debate team. He has often come back to volunteer and coach for my team that I coach now. I will never forget a state final debate he was judging along with four other judges and one of the debate teams got up and read the case for the wrong side. Their partner almost immediately started crying sitting next to her, and yet the student still did not realize their mistake until they had gotten through their entire first speech. The room was packed with observers, as it was a state final. Everyone was a little dumb struck and did not know how to proceed. Wilson quickly took charge and asked if it was ok by the other judges if they restarted the round and allowed the team to read the correct case. All the judges agreed. This experience truly highlights to me the kind of man Wilson is. He cares about fairness. He is compassionate when needed, and above all, capable.

A few years ago just as covid was winding down, one of our mutual high school teachers Ms. Lori Ishihara suddenly and tragically passed away. I remember both Wilson and I spoke at her remembrance at the school. His words struck me that day. He remembers his mentors and each person who has helped him along his journey.

In recent years we have worked together in our church's leadership. We were both serving a congregation of college students who attend BYU-Hawai'i. As we served together we planned and executed activities, meals, and service for the young adults. Today he

continues to serve this same congregation as its primary leader and organizer. He sacrifices his time, talents, and abilities to everyone he comes in contact with.

These are just a few of the many experiences I have had the privilege to witness about this great man. I can give no greater support or recommendation to any individual I have ever encountered than to Wilson Unga. In difficult situations he will prevail and in favorable situations he will flourish. He is the kind of person you would want on your team, in your friend group, and as a member of your family. He is upstanding in every way and exemplary as a leader.

Feel free to contact me for further information:

(808) 381-1119 56-490 Kamehameha Hwy, Hawai'i 96731

mlau025@gmail.com

Sincerely,

Mr. Michael Lau

Kahuku High & Intermediate School

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 11:08:49 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Viliami Fonokalafi	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhodes and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for the confirmation of Wilson A. Unga to the position of Family Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have had the privilege of growing up knowing Mr. Unga personally and have always been impressed by his integrity, empathy, and deep commitment to the community and family. Mr. Unga has always set the standard of what to achieve for in the fields of education and life for our relative family's. His grounded sense of fairness, legal acumen and understanding of the complex and sensitive issues that come before the Family Court make him exceptionally qualified for this role.

Mr. Unga's character and experience reflect the kind of judicial temperament that our community deserves—someone who is patient, thoughtful, and guided by both the law and compassion. He is deeply rooted in family values and the values of service and accountability, and he brings a unique multicultural and personal perspective that enhances his ability to understand and serve the diverse families of our state.

I am confident that Wilson Unga will serve the First Circuit with honor and distinction. I respectfully urge this committee to confirm his appointment.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Viliani Pepa Fonokalafi

Nancy Kata
137 St Georges Rd
Avondale, Auckland 0600
nancyvkata@gmail.com
+64210651432
17 April 2025

Chair Rhoads and Members of
the Senate Judiciary Committee
Supreme Court of Hawaii
417 South King Street
Honolulu, HI 96813

**RE: JC 30- Testimony in Support of the Confirmation of Wilson A. Unga for District
Family Court Judge, First Circuit**

Dear Chief Justice Recktenwald,

I am writing to express my strong support for Wilson Unga's nomination for a judicial appointment at the district and family courts. Wilson is a respected leader in our community, known for his unwavering dedication to helping others, fostering unity, and ensuring that those around him are supported in times of need.

As the Assistant President of our family community in New Zealand, Wilson has played a critical role in strengthening relationships and organizing efforts that benefit individuals and families. He is someone who leads by example, always willing to step up and contribute whenever there is a need. During his recent trip to New Zealand for a committee meeting, he personally delivered clothing and essential goods to members of the community, ensuring that families had the necessities to get by. His generosity also extended to securing a venue for our 2025 annual reunion, demonstrating his commitment to preserving and enhancing the bonds that unite us.

Wilson is a natural mediator and problem-solver. His ability to bring people together, navigate complex situations, and make fair and balanced decisions speaks to his strong moral character. His deep understanding of community values, combined with his ability to assess situations objectively, makes him exceptionally well-suited for a judicial position. I sincerely believe that Wilson would be an asset to the judiciary, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my thoughts on his character and contributions. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to reach out if any further information is needed.

Sincerely,
Nancy Kata
Grants Coordinator
West Ace Tigers Tongan Pickleball Club
+64210651432

JC-30

Submitted on: 4/17/2025 3:32:39 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/23/2025 9:15:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rodney Char	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Karl Rhoads and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Wilson Unga to the judicial office of District Court Family Judge, First Circuit, State of Hawai‘i. Over the years, I have had the privilege of working with Mr. Unga and have observed his exemplary professionalism and dedication.

In 2014, Mr. Unga served as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney while I was a courtroom bailiff in the O‘ahu District Courts. Mr. Unga consistently demonstrated efficiency, professionalism, and a thorough knowledge of the law. He managed his calendar effectively, even on the busiest days, and was always well-organized and straightforward in his interactions with the public. Mr. Unga treated pro se defendants and opposing counsel with fairness and respect. He was polite and quickly became a favorite among the staff. At that time, I was applying to law school and benefited greatly from listening to his arguments in court. Mr. Unga was always well-prepared and had a deep understanding of all relevant statutes and case law.

I also had the opportunity to observe Mr. Unga during jury trials while I was a law clerk at the Circuit Court of the First Circuit on Punchbowl Street. He is persuasive and clear in presenting his arguments, which are always well-structured and easy to understand. He articulates the law and relevant cases effectively when questioned by the court.

In 2021, I began working as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney (DPA) in Honolulu. When I joined the felony trials division, Mr. Unga was my Division Chief. During a period when our office was understaffed, Mr. Unga maintained morale among the DPAs. He was always available to discuss case issues or provide support when colleagues needed to vent frustrations. Despite carrying the heaviest workload, Mr. Unga remained composed and led our division through challenging times.

I recall a particular case in which we both had the same defendant. The defendant was arrested for another felony offense prior to sentencing. Pursuant to the plea agreement, the State was no longer able to honor the agreement due to a new felony arrest. Defense counsel filed a motion to withdraw the plea, raising an issue for which there was no precedent in Hawai‘i. I struggled to find persuasive case law, but without being asked, Mr. Unga sent me a draft containing case law from other jurisdictions that we could use for persuasive value. Rather than delegating the task, Mr. Unga led by example and completed the research himself.

Outside of work, I know Mr. Unga to be a devoted family man. He takes time off to spend with his children and is actively involved in his community on the North Shore. The judiciary would be fortunate to have a judge of Mr. Unga's character and abilities.

Mahalo,

Rodney A. Char, Esq.
Deputy Attorney General