



HAWAII LODGING & TOURISM
A S S O C I A T I O N

RE: Governor's Message – GM581 - Hawai'i Workforce Development Council

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council?

I wish to serve on the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (WDC) to contribute my expertise in workforce development, community engagement, and legislative advocacy to help strengthen Hawai'i's workforce pipeline. Through my work at the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association (HLTA), I have actively participated with initiatives that connect students and job seekers with career opportunities in the visitor industry. I see WDC as a critical platform to expand these efforts across multiple sectors, ensuring that Hawai'i residents have access to meaningful employment, training, and professional development opportunities.

By leveraging my experience in public-private partnerships, scholarship and internship programs, and advocating for workforce-friendly policies, I hope to help align workforce strategies with the state's economic priorities while addressing employment gaps and career pathway challenges for local workers.

2. How do you perceive the role and responsibilities as a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council?

As a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, I understand that my role would be to advise on workforce policies, promote employment initiatives, and help align workforce development efforts with the state's economic needs. This includes:

- Providing recommendations on workforce training programs, apprenticeships, and upskilling initiatives to ensure that workers are prepared for evolving job markets.
- Collaborating with government agencies, educational institutions, industry leaders, and trade associations to bridge gaps between job seekers and employers.
- Advocating for policies and funding opportunities that support workforce readiness, especially in high-demand sectors.
- Engaging with community stakeholders to identify challenges and develop solutions that address labor shortages, career progression barriers, and skills development.

I also recognize the responsibility to ensure equitable access to workforce opportunities, supporting underserved communities and fostering career mobility across diverse industries.

3. Given your understanding of the role and responsibilities of a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council why do you believe that you are qualified for the position? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, or knowledge that would aid in your decision-making ability as a member of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

I feel that I am qualified for this position due to my experience in workforce development, legislative advocacy, and industry partnerships. In my role as Vice President of Government & Community Affairs at HLTA, I have:

- Engaged in workforce development programs including high school internships, university mentorship initiatives, and scholarship programs designed to prepare Hawai'i's next generation of professionals.
- Advocated for workforce-friendly policies at the legislative level, ensuring that funding and regulatory frameworks support employment growth and training programs.
- Managed community outreach and education efforts, helping to connect employers with job seekers and fostering a culture of lifelong learning and professional development.

My strategic mindset and commitment to building pathways for Hawai'i's youth to secure meaningful jobs would allow me to contribute effectively to WDC's mission. Additionally, my ability to bring creative ideas to the fore, combined with my strong connections across the public, private, and community sectors, enables me to help the WDC connect the dots and foster impactful collaborations.

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

During my term, I hope to:

- Expand workforce development initiatives that bridge the gap between education and employment, particularly in hospitality, tourism, and other growing industries. This includes bringing the tourism industry at large to the table, ensuring that their need for skilled and dependable employees is addressed through WDC initiatives.
- Advocate for stronger partnerships between the private sector, educational institutions, and government agencies to ensure job training programs are aligned with real workforce demands. I aim to support and expand public-private

partnerships that provide internships and career development opportunities for Hawai'i's local youth.

- Improve access to career pathways and professional training for local workers by opening up pipelines that allow job seekers to more easily connect with employment opportunities across different sectors.
- Educate businesses, particularly those in the tourism industry, about the resources available through WDC and WDD, ensuring they can take full advantage of training programs, workforce development initiatives, and hiring support services on a larger scale.

5. Name three qualities that best describe you and that would make you stand out. How would these qualities benefit as a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council?

- Strategic Thinker – I have a strong ability to develop and implement forward-thinking workforce strategies that align with Hawai'i's evolving economic landscape. By anticipating industry trends and workforce needs, I can contribute innovative, data-driven, and practical solutions to WDC discussions that directly address labor shortages and skills gaps.
- Collaborative Connector – My extensive experience working across public, private, and nonprofit sectors allows me to foster partnerships that drive impactful workforce development initiatives. By bringing the tourism industry and other key stakeholders to the table, I can help WDC create stronger bridges between employers, educators, and job seekers, ensuring workforce programs are effective and widely utilized.
- Results-Driven Advocate – I am deeply committed to turning workforce policies into real opportunities for Hawai'i's job seekers and businesses. Whether through securing funding, expanding training programs, or improving employment pathways, I ensure that initiatives not only look good on paper but also produce tangible, measurable outcomes that benefit both job seekers and Hawai'i's economy.

6. Name one previous experience that would make you stand out. How would this benefit as a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council?

One of my most impactful experiences has been my critical role in supporting and executing HLTA's workforce development initiatives, particularly the Visitor Industry High School Internship Program and Generational Mentoring Program. Through my involvement, I have helped ensure these programs successfully connect students with career pathways in tourism, provide hands-on industry exposure, and foster mentorship relationships with business leaders.

I often run into former Generational Mentoring Program mentees who have since advanced into management roles within the industry. Many have expressed their gratitude for the program, acknowledging the impact it had on their professional growth and career trajectory.

7. Can you foresee any possible conflicts of interests that could arise during your service as a member of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council? How would you overcome any possible conflicts of interest?

As a Vice President at HLTA, my role involves advocating for the visitor industry's workforce needs. While I do not perceive any potential conflicts of interest, I would manage this by:

- Ensuring transparency in all discussions and decision-making by fully disclosing any potential conflicts before engaging in workforce policy decisions.
- Approaching workforce issues from a broad, multi-industry perspective, advocating not just for tourism but for policies that benefit Hawai'i's entire workforce.
- Recusing myself from discussions or votes where a direct conflict exists, while still contributing valuable insights from my experience in workforce development.

I am committed to serving the greater good of Hawai'i's workforce and would uphold ethical decision-making in my role on the WDC.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

February 27, 2025

To: The Honorable Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
The Honorable Chris Lee, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Labor and Technology Committee

Date: Friday, March 7, 2025
Time: 3:00 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 224, State Capitol

From: Jade T. Butay, Director
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)

Re: G.M. 581, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, JARED HIGASHI, for a term to expire 06-30-2025.

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations **supports** the confirmation of Jared Higashi to the Workforce Development Council.

Mr. Higashi has 11 years of government and community experience, particularly through his role at the Hawaii Lodging and Tourism Association. There, he led workforce development initiatives involving high school and university internships, mentorships, and scholarship programs that promote careers in the visitor industry.

Tourism is Hawaii's largest industry, accounting for about one-fifth of the state's gross product and generating billions in revenue. In recent years, the visitor industry has faced a decline in the available workforce pipeline, and it is crucial that we remain proactive to ensure its economic success now and in the future.

Mr. Higashi's experience will be invaluable in addressing the needs of the visitor industry. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations is confident that his addition to the Workforce Development Council will be crucial in effectively addressing the pressing workforce and economic development challenges we face across Hawaii.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Governor's Message 581.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 03/07/2025

Time: 03:00 PM

Location: CR 224 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Labor and Technology

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: GM 0581 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, JARED HIGASHI, for a term to expire 06-30-2025.

Purpose of Bill:

Department's Position:

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) supports GM 581, which nominates Mr. Jared Higashi for the Workforce Development Board.

As the Vice President of Government & Community Affairs at the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Mr. Higashi has demonstrated a strong commitment to workforce growth and public policy. His efforts to strengthen the connection between education and industry have expanded opportunities for local workers, ensuring they have the skills needed to thrive. Beyond his professional expertise, his dedication to community initiatives, such as his involvement with the Visitor Aloha Society of Hawai'i, reflects his passion for service.

The Department is confident that his knowledge and leadership will make a meaningful impact on the Board's work and help drive positive change for Hawai'i's workforce and economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of GM 581.



SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
Friday, March 7, 2025 — 3 p.m.

The Workforce Development Council supports GM 581.

Dear Chair Aquino and Members of the Committee:

We are Keith DeMello and Tuia'ana Scanlan, members of the State of Hawai'i Workforce Development Council (WDC) delegated with the authority to represent the WDC's legislative policy positions. Pursuant to [HRS Chapter 202](#), the WDC is the policy and planning advisor to the State on workforce development matters. It is comprised of both public, labor, and private-sector representatives appointed by the Governor to serve on the basis of their interest in and knowledge of workforce development programs in Hawai'i and how to support economic development throughout the state.

The WDC strongly supports GM 581, which submits for consideration and confirmation to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, Gubernatorial Nominee, Jared Higashi, for a term to expire 06-30-2025.

As Vice President of Government and Community Affairs at the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, Mr. Higashi brings valuable expertise in workforce development within Hawai'i's largest industry. He has demonstrated success in creating pathways to employment through high school internships, university-level mentorship programs, and scholarship initiatives.

His experience in building partnerships between public and private sectors, combined with his leadership in the 2023 Pacific Century Fellows program and as founder of Hospitality's Young Professionals & Entrepreneurs, provides an important perspective for the WDC's mission to develop Hawai'i's workforce. Mr. Higashi's appointment will strengthen the Council's connection to tourism industry stakeholders while bringing fresh insights to our workforce development strategies.

We respectfully urge the Committee to recommend approval of this nomination.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith DeMello
Member, WDC

Tuia'ana Scanlan
Member, WDC

March 7, 2025

To: Senator Henry Aquino, Chair
Senator Chris Lee, Vice Chair
Member of the Senate Committee on Labor & Technology

From: Jared Ellis

RE: GM581

My name is Jared Ellis, and I am writing to express my unequivocal support for the appointment of Jared Higashi to the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council.

I have known Mr. Higashi personally for nearly 20 years and had the pleasure of working with him for a number of years at The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association. When you consider his personal character alongside his professional experience, it is clear that he is an exceptional selection to serve on this Council.

Professionally speaking, Mr. Higashi has extensive experience in government affairs and a wealth of knowledge pertaining to workforce development initiatives and the various factors that surround local workforce development efforts. Having worked in government and the nonprofit sectors, he possesses unique qualifications that make him well-suited to this role.

Personally speaking, I hold Mr. Higashi in the highest regard and would work with or for him again in an instant. He cares deeply about Hawai'i and its people, and this would inform his time on the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council. My confidence in him cannot be overstated.

For these reasons, I strongly support GM581.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

LATE

GM-581

Submitted on: 3/7/2025 8:45:25 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/7/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian Miyamoto	Testifying for Hawaii Farm Bureau	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support