



The Senate Ka 'Aha Kenekoa

STATE CAPITOL
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

February 19th, 2025

Aloha Maria Cristina Valenzuela:

Congratulations on your nomination to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. To assist the Hawaii State Senate with its confirmation process, we request that you submit the following information to our office no later than February 21st, 2025, to ensure that we proceed in a timely manner:

1. Why do you wish to be a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.
As a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities I would represent the Executive Office on Aging and fill the mandated seat as Representative of State Entities that Administer Funds Provided Under the Older Americans Act of 1965. According to Public Law 106-402 (Developmental and Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000), the DD Council in its membership shall include representatives of relevant State entities including the Older Americans Act. [Section. 125 (C)(4)(A)(III)].
2. What do you perceive are the roles and responsibilities of a member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.
As a board member of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities my primary role is to support and advocate for the agency to achieve its mission to “empower, advocate, and support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities statewide to control their destiny and determine the quality of life they desire”. I have a responsibility as a member to also support the Council on DD to meet the goals and strategies/objectives as identified in their state plan. Specific responsibilities include attendance and participation at the annual retreat and monthly/quarterly meetings, including committee meetings, share ideas and provide information on policies, laws and issues that impact individuals with ID/DD and their families.
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? Please include a brief statement of your skills, expertise, and knowledge that would aid you as a member of the board.

Most of my professional experience includes program coordination and management, program and policy development, direct service work, and advocacy for vulnerable and underserved populations. From working with and serving older adults, individuals recovering from neurotrauma (e.g. traumatic brain injury, stroke, and spinal cord injuries), adjudicated youth, teen moms, and domestic violence survivors I've had the opportunity to learn from individuals and families about the challenges and successes that they face, which impact their health and social and economic. My approach in these roles has always been to listen, empathize, learn, and provide the information and resources/tools that will assist the individual to make decisions about their own life.

I am currently the Legal Assistance Developer with the Executive Office of Aging. The Executive Office of Aging is the lead agency in the coordination and oversight of a statewide system of aging and caregiver services and supports for the State of Hawai'i. As the Legal Services Developer I provide leadership and oversight of legal assistance services for older individuals. From advocating for resources critical to legal providers to helping older adults find an attorney with the proper expertise I work to maintain the rights of older individuals and individuals with disabilities under the Older Americans Act.

Additionally, as a representative of the Executive Office of Aging I can provide information, resources, and insights on aging issues that impact individuals with ID/DD. I can also learn from the State Council on DD and the ID/DD community on the gaps in services and supports that are still needed and identify resources that may be helpful. I would also share this information and ideas with the Aging Network and work to change/improve current policies and programming.

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

As a first time board member my goal is to listen and learn more about the State Council on DD by attending the board meetings and committee meetings. I currently participate in the Bridging ID/DD and Alzheimer's Committee and the Transportation, Housing, and Employment Committee of the Council on DD and will contribute to the efforts of the committees in meeting its objectives. I've attended and will continue to attend trainings to better understand how EOA can improve the quality of life for individuals with ID/DD and have or are at risk of Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. I also hope to continue to support the committee in how to address the needs of these individuals and their families.

In consultation with the Council on DD I will work with EOA to update and refresh the Aging and Disability Resources Center website to include and list all the pertinent and necessary resources on disability. I am also participating on the Guardianship Work Group that is trying to address issues with the States guardianship and conservatorship procedures.

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

Three qualities:

Person centered approach- I believe in providing the information and assistance needed for individuals to determine what is best for them and what type of life they want/choose. I also respect one's dignity and the ability to choose and make good and bad choices. I will take this same approach in advocating for individuals with ID/DD. In working with the agency, I can provide information and help with efforts, particularly in how it relates to aging and disability.

Determined- when I set my mind to something I work to get it done. I will apply this same approach in assisting the Council on DD to achieve its mission and meet the goals/objectives set in their state plan.

Collaboration- We don't exist in silos and are part of a community. As a board member I would work with, share ideas and coordinate efforts to ensure that the Council on DD achieves its goals.

6. Name a previous experience you've had that will be beneficial as a member.
From 2017-2018 I worked at the Dept. of Health Developmental Disabilities Division with the Neurotrauma program. The Neurotrauma program provides education on neurotrauma, assistance to individuals and families to identify and obtain access to services, and the creation of a neurotrauma registry through the Neurotrauma Special Fund. Additionally, I worked for 14 years with older adults and their family caregivers at Catholic Charities Hawaii and at my current position at the Executive Office on Aging. In my professional experience working with individuals recovering from neurotrauma and with older adults I gained a better understanding of the challenges and successes that these vulnerable populations face and how this impacts their wellbeing and quality of life. My understanding of the Older Americans Act and how the services and supports under OAA can assist individuals with ID/DD and their families and will also benefit the agency.
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?
I don't foresee any possible conflicts of interest. To address/avoid any conflicts of interest it's important to identify any conflicts, be transparent about the conflict and lessen any risks that might arise.

March 22, 2025
Page 4 of 4

Please be aware that testimony submitted to committees – including your responses to the above questions - is posted on the Legislature's website; you may wish to remind individuals who intend to submit testimony on your behalf of the public nature of the testimony.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Here is the link to your nomination on the State Capitol website:

[Measure Status Details for GM 610](#)

Mahalo,

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

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

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 610 - State Council on Developmental Disabilities Gubernatorial Nominee Maria Cristina C. Valenzuela

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **STRONGLY SUPPORTS GM 610** to confirm the nomination of Maria Cristina C. Valenzuela 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.

Maria Cristina Valenzuela is the legal service developer for the Executive Office on Aging. Her appointment fulfills the requirement to have a representative from the Older Americans Act of 1965. As a representative from the Executive Office on Aging, Ms. Valenzuela would assist the Council in bringing together the aging and disability networks to increase collaboration among agencies. Ms. Valenzuela's knowledge as an advocate, policy expert, and legislative background will make her a valuable member of the Council.

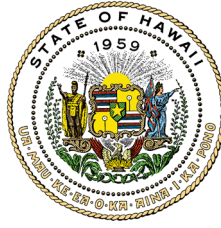
Thank you for the opportunity to express **our strong support for GM 610** to confirm Maria Cristina C. Valenzuela to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII
KE KIA'AINA O KA MOKU'AINA 'O HAWAII

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250 SOUTH HOTEL STREET, SUITE 406
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-2831

Testimony in SUPPORT of GM610
Consideration and Confirmation for the State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Gubernatorial Nominee Maria Cristina Valenzuela, for a term to expire 06-30-2028

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
SENATOR JOY A. SAN BUENAVENTURA, CHAIR
SENATOR HENRY J.C. AQUINO, VICE CHAIR

Testimony of Caroline Cadirao
Director, Executive Office on Aging
Attached Agency to the Department of Health

Hearing: Monday, March 24, 2025, 1:00 P.M., Conference Room 225

EOA's Position: EOA supports the nomination of Ms. M. Cristina Valenzuela to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities

Comments: Ms. Valenzuela is the Legal Services Developer for the Department of Health, Executive Office on Aging. In her role she understands the issues facing our kupuna and caregivers and can effectively serve the aging and disability community. Cristina's knowledge of the Older Americans Act (OAA) will serve her well in this role as the OAA/Title III representative.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

GM-610

Submitted on: 3/19/2025 4:12:53 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 Maria Cristina Valenzuela on GM610.



Testimony to the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services
Monday, March 24, 2025
1:00 p. m.
State Capitol Conference Room 225 and via videoconference

Re: GM 610 Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Gubernatorial Nominee, Maria Cristina Valenzuela, for a term to expire June 30, 2028.

Dear Chair San Buenaventura, Vice Chair Aquino, and Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services:

I am Gary Simon, a member of the board of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition, whose mission is to improve the quality of life of those who give and receive care by increasing community awareness of caregiver issues through continuing advocacy, education, and training. I am testifying as an individual who has worked in healthcare for over thirty-five years, and I am offering testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition.

The Hawai'i Family Caregiver Coalition strongly supports the nomination of Maria Cristina Valenzuela to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

I have known Ms. Valenzuela since 2011, when we served together on the Statewide Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. Ms. Valenzuela's extensive, successful experience in public policy planning, development, implementation, and oversight will be of immense value to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

We urge you to support Ms. Valenzuela's nomination, and we urge you to recommend her confirmation.

Mahalo nui loa,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Simon".

Gary Simon



Email gsimon@aarp.org

TESTIMONY

Committee on Health and Human Services
Chair, Senator Joy A. San Buenaventura
Vice-Chair, Senator Henry J. Aquino

Re: GM610, Submitting for consideration and confirmation to the State Council on Developmental Disabilities, Gubernatorial Nominee, MARIA CRISTINA VALENZUELA, for a term to expire 06-30-2028

Hearing: Monday, March 24 at 1:00pm in Conference Room 225 and Videoconference

Aloha Chair San Buenaventura and Members of the Committee:

My name is Cristina Valenzuela, and I'm submitting testimony as an individual in support of GM610, for consideration and confirmation on the Board of the State Council on Developmental Disabilities till 06-30-2028.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the State Board of the Council on Developmental Disabilities. I currently work as the Legal Services Developer at the Executive Office on Aging, an attached agency with the Department of Health. As a member of the Board, I would be committed to helping the agency meet its goals and initiatives, particularly in bridging individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families with information and services on aging, as provided by the Older Americans Act. Having worked in the aging field for 12+ years I would share my knowledge of aging issues and elder rights to ensure that individuals with ID/DD and their families have the services and supports that they may need. I would also work with the State Council on Developmental Disabilities to identify and address any gaps in services.

I hope to continue to serve on the Board and contribute to the agency's efforts to empower, advocate, and support individuals with ID/DD statewide to control their own destiny and determine the quality of life they desire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

M. Cristina Valenzuela