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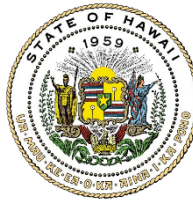
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LATE

STATE OF HAWAI'I
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

April 21, 2025

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GM 789: Consideration and Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, Gubernatorial Appointee Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford

Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) strongly supports the confirmation of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as a Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Ms. Tomasa began her career with the OPD in 1999. During her time with the office, Ms. Tomasa has always exhibited the highest levels of work ethic, diligence and professional integrity. Ms. Tomasa began in the Appellate Section and progressed to become an attorney in the Felony Section before leaving for a civil law firm for about one year. Ms. Tomasa returned to the OPD in 2003 and became a permanent member of the Appellate Section of the office from 2003 to 2023. In 2024, Ms. Tomasa was appointed to the position of District Court Supervisor. After one year as District Court Supervisor, Ms. Tomasa was appointed as Appellate Section Supervisor (her current position).

Ms. Tomasa's legal knowledge, high ethical and professional standards and diligence cannot be understated. Ms. Tomasa has consistently served as a resource for the OPD and a mentor for younger attorneys. Ms. Tomasa's promotions to supervisor positions were earned as a result of her dedication to the OPD and its mission and her legal skill, knowledge and competence. Ms. Tomasa has appeared before the district, family, circuit and appellate courts, the Hawai'i Paroling Authority and the Legislature numerous times throughout her career and has gained a reputation as a zealous and skilled practitioner and a courageous advocate.

Ms. Tomasa will undoubtedly serve as a judge with integrity, compassion, intelligence, and dedication to the law as she has throughout her career as an attorney. The OPD strongly supports the confirmation of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as a Circuit Court Judge of the

GM 789
4-21-25 hearing
Page 2

Circuit Court of the First Circuit. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

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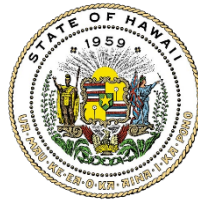
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April 20, 2025

**RE: Letter of Support for the Nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as
Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit**

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford's nomination for the position of Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit. I first met Taryn in 2007 when I began my career at the Office of the Public Defender. I had the opportunity to work alongside her and have benefitted from her extensive experience and expertise as one of the senior attorneys in the Appellate Division.

In January 2024, I officially began my role as the First Deputy of the Office of the Office of the Public Defender under State Public Defender Jon Ikenaga. Our administration relies heavily on our division supervisors, and without hesitation, Taryn was selected to be the supervisor of the Oahu District Court section. Although it had been several years since Taryn had worked in District Court, she took the role head-on and quickly learned how to efficiently and effectively run the division. Oahu's District Court section handles thousands of cases each year in various courtrooms across the island. The supervisor's workload is immense, and Taryn consistently proved she was the right choice for the position.

Aside from the supervisory duties of managing the attorneys in the division, Taryn regularly attended stakeholder meetings, participated in trainings, committees and working groups, and was a critical part of the office's legislative team. In February 2025, we again called upon Taryn to pivot and take on the role as the statewide Appellate Division supervisor.

Without question, Taryn will approach her position as a Circuit Court judge with the same tenacity and commitment. She is often one of the first to the office, and often

one of the last to leave. She is confident and accomplished enough to take on this important position and humble enough to seek guidance and help when needed. Her career dedicated to public service speaks volumes about her character and intention in seeking this judgeship.

Taryn has my utmost respect and my full support. It is an honor to write in support of her nomination.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/19/2025 4:26:47 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michael A. Town	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha all. Please consider this as strong and unqualified support of Taryn Tomasa as Circuit Court Judge. She has appeared before me countless times effectively, professionally and in an exemplary manner. Our staff and I hold her in highest esteem. Even when the case was controversial or highly publicized, she was fair, civil and patient. I have no doubt she will continue to do the right thing as a jurist! Thanks for your consideration. Respectfully, Judge Michael A Town (retired).



April 22, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

LATE

Re: GM789 Submitting for consideration and confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit (Island of O'ahu), Gubernatorial Appointee, Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford, for a term to expire in 10 years.

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 9:15 a.m.

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and members of the Committee on Judiciary:

Hawaii Women Lawyers ("HWL") respectfully submits testimony in **support** of the nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to **the Circuit Court of the First Circuit (Island of O'ahu)** as Circuit Court Judge for a term of 10 years.

HWL is a nonprofit organization with members including approximately 300 attorneys. HWL's mission includes improving the status of women in the legal profession, increasing the number of women attorneys in positions of authority and responsibility, and promoting the advancement of all women.

Increasing opportunities for qualified women in the Judiciary is extremely important. As highlighted by the World Justice Project, the rule of law depends on having justice delivered by "competent, ethical, and independent representatives and neutrals who reflect the makeup of the communities they serve." HWL believes that continuing to include qualified women in the Judiciary is vitally important and appreciates the significant strides made in the past several years to improve the diversity of our bench.

Noting that the HSBA has found Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to be qualified for the position of Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit (Island of O'ahu) and for the reasons above, HWL supports the appointment of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this nomination.

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.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 10:28:53 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sandra Larsen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of the appointment of **TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD** to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Taryn since 1995, when we first met in law school. Over the decades, we have maintained a close professional and personal relationship, and I have witnessed firsthand the qualities that make her uniquely suited for a judicial role.

Taryn has dedicated the majority of her career serving the public in the Public Defender's Office, where she has excelled as both a trial and appellate attorney. Her work speaks to her tireless commitment to fairness and her unwavering advocacy for those who need it most.

I know Taryn to be a person of the highest integrity, with strong moral character and a deep commitment to justice. She is ethical, kind, incredibly hardworking, and respectful —qualities that are essential for any judge.

I have no doubt that Taryn will serve the bench with the same dedication, wisdom, and commitment to justice that she has demonstrated throughout her career. She is an outstanding nominee, and I fully support her appointment.

Mahalo for your consideration, Sandra Larsen

Schlueter, Kwiat & Kennedy

A Limited Liability Law Partnership

Michael H. Schlueter
Jason R. Kwiat
Andrew M. Kennedy
Nicole K. Bowman
Eli N. Bowman

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April 18, 2025

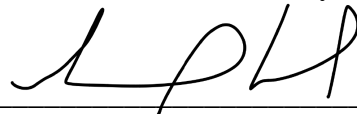
Chairman Rhaods, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senators Buenaventura, Awa, Chang
Judiciary Committee
Hawai'i State Senate
Honolulu, HI

RE: GM 789, Taryn Tomasa

Dear Judiciary Committee:

I write in support of Ms. Taryn Tomasa's for Circuit Court Judge for the First Circuit. I am familiar with Ms. Tomasa's work as an appellate attorney for the Office of the Public Defender. She has always had a good reputation for being a thoughtful appellate attorney with a good knowledge of the law. From my in person meetings with Ms. Tomasa she has always presented with a demeanor that would translate well to the role of judge.

Regards,
Schlueter, Kwiat & Kennedy LLLP



Andrew Kennedy

SCHLUETER, KWIAT & KENNEDY LLLP

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GM-789

Submitted on: 4/18/2025 2:18:03 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Teal Takayama	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm writing in strong support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford's confirmation as Circuit Court Judge.

I have known Taryn for nearly seven years as a colleague and supervisor at the Office of the Public Defender. She has always been generous with her time, never hesitating to offer encouragement or advice to any of the attorneys in our office – including me. I can always count on her to answer the phone for emergency questions and she is always quick with a sound legal response. I believe she truly cares about mentoring and building strong attorneys to advocate for all members of our community.

Taryn's wealth of experience and knowledge, and deep compassion, will serve her well as a Circuit Court Judge.



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April 18, 2025

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: **GM 789, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of
the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD**

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conf. Rm. 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senator Chang, Senator San Buenaventura and Senator
Awa,

I strongly support the nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. She is attorney of incredible experience, composure, integrity, grit and intelligence. These qualities are just a few that make her an excellent addition to the Circuit Court bench. These qualities have served her well over a distinguished legal career, and I have no doubt that she will transition smoothly to the Circuit Court and her new responsibilities to the Judiciary and our community.

I am currently a partner at Glendon & Ponce, a small firm handling state and federal criminal defense and civil litigation matters. I am also the Chair of the State of Hawai'i Defender Council, President of the Paepae o He'eia Board of Directors, and member of the Native Hawaiian Bar Association Board of Directors. I have been practicing law before the State and Federal Courts in Hawai'i since 2004.

I have known Ms. Gifford since 2004, when I first started at the Office of the Public Defender. She was a senior District Court attorney at the time and was already in charge of training new deputies to handle the demands of court and client management. I watched as she easily transition from doing trials to handling appeals of all levels. Over the course of time, she has become one of the premier appellate attorneys in the State, authoring 132 appellate briefs, 59 writs to the Hawai'i Supreme Court, 47 reply briefs, countless legal memoranda and arguing 17

oral arguments. She holds one of the most impressive appellate records. She is one of the most qualified supervisors of the OPD Appellate Division and has tirelessly contributed to the Hawai'i criminal jurisprudence on behalf of indigent and underrepresented clients. What she has accomplished is no simple feat; it has taken years of dedication to public service to a disenfranchised population, providing them with zealous and effective legal advocacy.

Ms. Gifford brings to the Circuit Court bench a wide breadth of experience. As a trial attorney, she understands the ins and out of preparing a case for resolution, negotiations or trial, depending on the needs of the client. As an appellate attorney, she has seen cases at the back end when they are being reviewed for compliance with the law. She brings the ability to see the cases from all angles to her new role as judge. Combined with her strong research and writing skills, I am confident that she will handle any Circuit Court calendar with diligence, professionalism and confidence. She is someone you can rely on to get the job done. I believe trustworthiness is at the core of her success; you can trust her to exercise good judgment with compassion and integrity.

In all the years that I have known Ms. Gifford, I have also witnessed her unwavering commitment to her family. She balances the demands of her high-stakes profession with being a wife and mother of two sons. I mention this to give you an idea of her well-roundedness. She has built an impressive reputation at work where she is known as the "go to" person in the criminal defense community if you need a legal question answered. At the same time, she is her family's "go to" person and has managed to balance her equally demanding role of wife and mother with the demands of her career. That she is thriving in both roles is a testament to her strong values and strong support system. She brings both to her new role as Circuit Court judge, and I believe this foundation is what will guide her in her decision-making.

In closing, I firmly support Ms. Gifford's nomination to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. I look forward to her continued contributions in this new role. We are all fortunate to have her serve our State and community as a Circuit Court judge.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Me ka ha'aha'a,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Crystal K. Glendon', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Crystal K. Glendon

1130 N. Nimitz Hwy., Suite A-254
Honolulu, HI 96817

April 18, 2025

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Hawai`i State Capitol
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: Comments Regarding Gubernatorial Nominee Taryn R. Tomasa (Gifford) as
Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit

Honorable Committee Members:

I write in wholehearted support of Taryn R. Tomasa as a Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. I first met Taryn when she became the law clerk for the late Circuit Court Judge John S.W. Lim in November 1998. In the middle of her circuit court clerkship, Judge Lim was appointed as an Associate Judge on the Hawai`i Intermediate Court of Appeals, so Taryn moved with him and fortuitously gained appellate experience from a judicial perspective. After her clerkship, Taryn became my colleague at the Public Defender's Office ("PDs") in November 1999. [I retired after 34 years as a Deputy Public Defender, 8/1989-12/2023.] Taryn advanced from the Appellate Section through the trial sections (misdemeanor and Felony), until November 2002, when she left to work with a civil firm. However, Taryn returned to the PDs after a year and became a permanent member of the Appellate Section (10/2003-11/2023). The Appellate Section consists of five senior appellate attorneys (including myself 2003-2023) as well as a couple of the newest PDs. Thus, Taryn and I worked closely with each other for twenty years until a month before I retired, when she was named Supervisor of the District Court Section. I often visited the office in the early months of my retirement; Taryn always had misdemeanor attorneys in her office asking questions and seeking suggestions/guidance with their cases. She always had sound answers and gave them good advice. Following the unexpected departure of the Appellate Supervisor in February 2025, Taryn again returned to the Appellate Section, now as its Supervisor.

Taryn is hardworking and extremely diligent. She has been known to research the statutes and/or cases in the other 49 states to support her appellate arguments, an exhausting task. Taryn obviously has excellent legal research and analysis skills. She is smart, creative, and a practical problem solver. I know Taryn will view the facts of a case in their context, such that her decisions will be rational and legally grounded.

As a person, Taryn is friendly and engaging, has a good (and a sarcastic) sense of humor, as well as a fair and compassionate heart. She has a strong sense of morality and ethics (we've had numerous discussions about trying to raise our children to have strong morals and ethics), which would not be influenced by pity or passion. I am certain Taryn would have excellent judicial demeanor and treat all litigants fairly and courteously. Although the PDs would intellectually be a lot poorer for her departure, I am confident that Taryn has the intellect and the legal and organizational skills necessary to be an excellent Circuit Court Judge. For all these reasons, I humbly ask that you confirm Taryn R. Tomasa as Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Sincerely,

/s/Phyllis J. Hironaka
Phyllis J. Hironaka
Deputy Public Defender, retired

April 18, 2025

TO: Chair Karl Rhoads
Vice Chair Mike Gabbard
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: **GM 789, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee *TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD***

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 9:15 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conf. Rm. 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

I write in strong support of the confirmation of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as a Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit.

I have had the privilege of knowing Taryn for over 20 years. We first worked together at the Office of the Public Defender, where I observed firsthand her dedication to her clients and her deep commitment to justice. In my current work in private practice, I have continued to encounter her professionally, most recently in her role as supervisor of the District Court Division.

Taryn is a person of exceptional moral and ethical character. She is intelligent, hardworking, and deeply committed to the rule of law. I have no doubt that she possesses all the qualities necessary to serve as an outstanding judge.

I wholeheartedly support her nomination and respectfully urge the Committee to confirm her appointment.

Sincerely,

/S/ Alan J. Komagome

Alan J. Komagome
Attorney at Law

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 3:13:29 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Antoinette Lilley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I'm writing in support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford's nomination as a Circuit Court judge of the First Circuit. I've had the pleasure of working with Taryn for nine years at the Office of the Public Defender. Although Taryn was never my direct supervisor, she's always been an excellent resource for me as a younger attorney in the office. When I started off in the appeals section of the office, Taryn's assistance was invaluable in figuring out the mechanics of preparing appellate cases and appearing in front of the parole board. As I moved through the District Court and Circuit Court sections of the office, Taryn remained one of my main resources on case law whenever I came across a new legal issue. Taryn always has an open-door policy for her coworkers, and she never made me feel that I was wasting her time or keeping her from getting her own work done (and there's always a never-ending pile of work for all the attorneys at our office).

Taryn has many characteristics that will make her a great Circuit Court judge. Taryn is an extremely diligent and detail-oriented attorney, but she's also empathetic and understanding. She never attempts to tear someone down for failing to meet the high standards that she sets for herself. She is someone who leads by example and inspires her coworkers to go the extra mile for our clients, just like she does. She also encourages her coworkers to exercise their own independent judgment and push back on her opinions if they see an issue differently. Circuit Court judges are not lone wolves – they're expected to lead a team to run their courtroom as efficiently as possible. In my experience as an attorney in Circuit Court, I've noticed that efficiency doesn't thrive in courtrooms run with micromanaging and constant negative critiques. The best-run courtrooms have an environment where the staff feels comfortable and confident enough to voice their concerns when necessary. Taryn's humility and reasonableness will make her an excellent leader and mentor for her future law clerks and judicial assistants.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to confirm Taryn's appointment as a Circuit Court judge. She has the skills, temperament, and work ethic to excel in this position, and she will be a credit to our state's judiciary.

Best,

Antoinette Lilley

Deputy Public Defender

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 3:32:56 PM

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

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

Comments:

Taryn Tomasa Gifford is one of the most honest, diligent, resilient, and hard-working people I know. Initially college roommates and then as friends, we have seen each other through the everyday kinds of triumphs and obstacles, as well as the milestones and life challenges that occur when you know someone for over 30 years.

We were placed into the same apartment at UH Manoa and quickly became friends. My respect for her grew as I witnessed the hard-working individual she was. While attending school full-time at UHM, she also completed a paralegal certificate at Kapiolani Community College and worked 30+ hours a week between two part-time jobs to help support herself.

While in college, Taryn had both her moped and a vehicle (both of which she paid for on her own) stolen from campus on separate occasions. These were her modes of transportation from campus to KCC and her part-time jobs, so it was both frustrating and demoralizing. And, in spite of these setbacks, Taryn persisted and persevered.

As one of my longest and closest friends, I have counted on Taryn's support and empathy through my most difficult times. I especially appreciate and rely upon her honesty and ability to help me assess situations from an objective standpoint so that I can make reasonable choices that parallel my own values. And whether I like it or not at the time, Taryn always seeks reliable data or information to help make a decision. Whether we are talking about purchasing a household appliance, a social issue, or a potentially controversial topic, Taryn will always reference some kind of source to her information which, in all honesty, is sometimes frustrating and funny at the same time. Taryn just cannot help reviewing and including facts to support her stance.

As a friend, Taryn offers her own opinions that either validate mine or present a different perspective. No matter my final decision, Taryn is not judgemental if my ultimate choices are different from hers. In addition to being hard-working and diligent, these are qualities that I believe will make Taryn an effective judge.

As a high school counselor, I have heard countless students identify "lawyer" as their dream occupation because of the prestige and financial benefits they would receive and because they "like to argue." For Taryn, it has always been about the laws that hold people accountable and protect the rights of all individuals. I especially remember a discussion we

had as she prepared for her interview with the public defender's office. I felt that representing people who, in my opinion, were more often guilty than not, would be too difficult. Taryn remained steadfast in her belief that her work as a public defender meant that she was not just representing one person, but representing and protecting the rights of all people.

I wholeheartedly support Taryn Tomasa Gifford's judicial nomination because I believe that she has the integrity, objectivity, and work ethic to fulfill the moral, ethical, and professional obligations of this position. She believes in the legal system and will work to ensure that the rights of all individuals are protected while also holding people accountable.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 5:21:01 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Thomas Christensen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in support of Taryn Tomasa for Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Ms. Tomasa is hardworking, dilligent in her preparation, and well suited for the appointment.

She will serve our community well.

Date: April 20, 2025

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice-Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: GM789, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, Gubernatorial Appointee, Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 9:15 a.m.
State Capitol, Conference Room 225
415 South Beretania Street

It is my honor to write this testimony in strong support of the confirmation of Gubernatorial Appointee Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. I have worked with Ms. Tomasa Gifford at the State Office of the Public Defender for eighteen (18) years.

Ms. Tomasa Gifford possesses a great analytical mind with extensive knowledge of criminal law. She is a diligent and meticulous worker. She has written countless appellate briefs and has successfully argued many cases before the State Intermediate Court of Appeals and the State Supreme Court. She assists attorneys with writing appellate briefs, and she has prepared numerous attorneys for oral arguments before our appellate courts.

During the workday as well as after work hours, she assists attorneys by providing them with case law support in preparation for trial and for writing substantive motions. When I need to brainstorm legal issues or prepare for jury trials, I seek Ms. Tomasa Gifford for advice and information. She freely shares her knowledge with others. Even with her breadth and depth of legal knowledge and her ability to recall vast amounts of case law, she does not make others feel inferior. She takes the time necessary to ensure attorneys understand what she is explaining. She also follows up with the attorneys she helps to see how the attorneys are progressing with either their motion or trial preparations.

When she became the District Court Division Supervisor at our office and assumed greater leadership responsibilities, she still made time to help District Court, Family Court, and Circuit Court attorneys with motion hearings and trial preparations. She continued to stay after work hours to assist attorneys while performing her supervisory duties for the District Court Division.

Ms. Tomasa Gifford is trustworthy. I confide in her when I am dealing with professional and personal matters. Ms. Tomasa Gifford is both an encourager and a motivator of attorneys in our office. She sets high standards when it comes to work quality and work effort. Accountability is important to her. She is tough when needed but makes herself available to listen to concerns and address them meaningfully. I have never witnessed her behave or speak inappropriately. She treats everyone with dignity and respect.

I strongly support the confirmation of Gubernatorial Appointee Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. Ms. Tomasa Gifford possesses the character and skills necessary to be an exceptional judge. Her confirmation will be a positive reflection on the State of Hawaii. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my testimony.

Respectfully,

/S/OKECHUKWU AMADI

Okechukwu “Okie” Amadi
Deputy Public Defender
State of Hawaii

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 7:49:46 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Minda Yamaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Committee Members,

I am writing in strong support of GM 789: Gubernatorial Appointee, Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford for Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit

I worked with Taryn for five years at the State of Hawai'i Public Defender Office while she was in appellate litigation. Taryn would openly and regularly brainstorm appellate and trial issues with attorneys of all levels. I often interrupted her lunch hour with pressing questions, to which she would graciously take time to answer. Afterwards, we often shared tales lamenting difficulties in work or personal aspects of our life. Despite the enormous burdens of being a career public defender, Taryn typically found a way to inject some levity into our shared struggles, thus providing me with the encouragement I needed to carry on with the daunting work. Taryn's candid, well-reasoned advice, coupled with her passion for the law are the characteristics that will make her a particularly successful judge. I have no doubt Taryn possesses the personal qualities and professional acumen for this position and look forward to the contribution she will make to Hawai'i once confirmed.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely, Minda Yamaga

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 8:52:49 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Esther Fukushima	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as a Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit. I have had the privilege of working with Taryn for over 20 years at the Office of the Public Defender. She is smart, respected and very dedicated to her work. She will be an asset to the Hawaii State Judiciary.

April 20, 2025

Re: GM 789, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit, Gubernatorial Appointee, Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary:

I am writing in support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford for Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit. As her older sister, I believe that Taryn possesses the integrity, knowledge, and demeanor that this challenging position demands.

Taryn has strong moral and ethical values. She is a fantastic wife and mother and is a positive role model to her two sons. She is a self-starter and a highly motivated individual. Taryn is a self-taught seamstress and an accomplished baker and cook. She is good at balancing her responsibilities at work and at home. Taryn is patient, compassionate, honest, diligent, courageous and decisive. She is always looking to self-improve and better herself, and she works hard to be well prepared to help her co-workers and clients to the best of her abilities.

Taryn has been practicing law for over twenty-six years and has a broad range of experience in both civil and criminal practice. Currently, Taryn is a supervisor at the Office of the Public Defender.

I believe that Taryn would be an excellent candidate for this position. I have no doubt that she would give it her all. She has the skills, knowledge, and determination to get the job done right and would be an invaluable asset if given the chance.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stacey K. Tomasa

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/20/2025 9:06:27 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melanie Ragamat Aguiran	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

It is my honor to write this letter in support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford's confirmation as a Circuit Court Judge.

I have had the privilege of working with Taryn at the Office of the Public Defender for nearly seven years. Whenever I have a legal issue, she is one of the first colleagues I seek out for guidance. Whether the matter is simple or complicated, Taryn approaches it with thoughtfulness and clarity. She has never made me feel that any question was unimportant, and she consistently encourages those around her to grow in their practice.

Taryn has a strong understanding of the law, is fair, and most of all kind. I believe these qualities are very important for someone serving as a Circuit Court Judge. With more younger attorneys coming into Circuit Court, I believe it's important to have someone who is a natural teacher and mentor to help guide and shape the next generation of lawyers.

If selected, Taryn would be a positive reflection of the Hawai'i State Judiciary. Thank you for taking the time to read and consider my letter of support.

Catherine Gutierrez Souza
1001 Bishop Street, Ste. 710
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Tel. No. 808-532-3229
catherinegutierrezlaw@gmail.com

April 20, 2025

Re: Consideration and Confirmation of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford as Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit, State of Hawaii

Dear Chair Karl Rhoades and Members of the Committee on Judiciary:

This letter is being submitted in support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford's confirmation as a Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit. I've known Taryn Gifford for about 30 years on a personal and professional capacity. I know she possesses the character, intellect, professional experience and is more than qualified to be a Circuit Court Judge. I submit this letter in strong support of her confirmation.

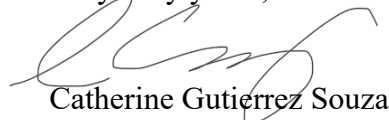
Taryn Gifford has extensive experience working at the State Public Defender's office as a trial and appellate attorney and division supervisor. She has handled countless cases and authored many briefs and writs and is very knowledgeable of the rules and laws involved in the district, family, circuit and appellate courts. She will be greatly missed at the Public Defender's Office. She not only has criminal law experience, but she is also familiar with civil and administrative law proceedings.

She is a hard-working seasoned attorney and is also an intelligent lawyer with plenty of common sense and people skills, all of which are important traits for a judge. She is more than qualified to be Circuit Court Judge. She has the administrative experience and organizational and people skills to lead others.

On a personal note, Taryn Gifford is a dedicated wife and mother of two sons. She is friends to many who have benefitted from her generosity and aloha. She will continue to have the support of her family and friends. I know she will continue to work hard and dedicate herself as a Circuit Court Judge.

I am confident with Taryn Gifford's legal experience, strong moral character, diligence, fair-mindedness, coupled with her intellect, that she will be a great addition and leader to Circuit Court. I strongly support her confirmation. Thank you for considering my comments.

Very truly yours,



Catherine Gutierrez Souza

Monday, April 21, 2025

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Re: GM 789 Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee *TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD*

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senator Chang, Senator San Buenaventura, and Senator Awa,

It is with deep pride—and a touch of personal heartbreak—that I submit this letter in **strong support** of my friend and colleague, TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD, for her nomination to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Taryn is one of the most brilliant legal minds I've had the privilege of working with. Over the years, she has been my most trusted springboard—unfailing unbiased, methodical, and razor-sharp in her legal analysis. Whether I was wrestling with routine issues or navigating the most complex matters of my career (or my life), I always found myself on her couch, leaning on her insight and intellect.

Her door is always open. Literally. I've stood in line outside her office, along with many others at the Public Defender's Office, because we all know that if you want the most thoughtful, legally sound answer—not the friendliest one—you go to Taryn. Her judgment is grounded in case law, precedent, and unshakable integrity.

Watching her advocate with grace and force, even early in my career, lit a fire in me. I remember thinking, "I want to be like Taryn." I still do.

The Circuit Court will gain a truly extraordinary Judge. I will lose a daily confidante, but the judiciary—and the public—will be better for it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Merlinda Garma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Merlinda Garma

Deputy Public Defender, Felony Division
Office of the Public Defender

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 2:18:27 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christina Gergis	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write simply to say that Taryn would be a great asset to the judiciary. As a colleague, she supports and challenges others--always generous with her time. And as a friend, she is considerate and enriches the lives of those who know her.

While I consider it a great loss to our office, I would hope that this body would see the wisdom in confirming Taryn to the bench. To have someone who, after so many years of advocacy on behalf of our citizens who are most in need, is still full of the sincere desire to grow that service and bring her intellect to bear elsewhere...it is a rarity. Respectfully, please take this opportunity for the betterment of our judiciary.

Mahalo for your time.

HENRY P. TING
Honolulu, HI 96822

April 20, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Senate Committee On Judiciary
415 South Beretania Street, Conf. Rm. 225
State Capital
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Testimony in Support of GM 789 - Nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford
for Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, and Committee Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to serve as Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. It is my privilege to know Taryn as a friend and a co-worker at the Office of the Public Defender for over twenty years.

Taryn is a fierce and zealous advocate for her clients. Time and again, in courts, in administrative hearings, in briefs, she has demonstrated her commitment to justice. In my twenty-nine years as an attorney, I have not seen anyone more fearlessly stand up to powerful, sometimes abusive, tribunals and speak truth to power.

With her breadth of experience and knowledge of the law, Taryn is a valuable resource for her colleagues. A simple Westlaw search of her name shows the range of her work and the laws she has changed. Everyone in the office goes to Taryn with questions about the law and questions about how to execute trial strategies. Her advice and probing questions made me a better lawyer.

Taryn is also a source of advice for how to deal with people. In her role as an advocate, I have witnessed her treat the most difficult clients with patience and respect. As a supervising attorney, Taryn managed a dozen attorneys and several administrative staff members and dealt with conflicts and challenging personalities. Her appointment will be a great loss to the office.

For these reasons, I support the nomination of Taryn to be Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit and ask for your favorable consideration of her nomination. You will be proud to have her represent the Judiciary.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Henry Ting

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 7:08:47 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Lum	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Senator Rhoads and members of the Senate Committee,

I strongly support the Taryn Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. Ms. Tomasa Gifford was one of the first people that trained me when I first started practicing law. She was in the appellate section at the Office of the Public Defender. During my time there as a public defender, I relied on Ms. Tomasa Gifford countless times during trial or hearings when there was a legal position I was unsure on. She was always able to provide me with guidance as how case law would apply in my situation. Even when case law may not have supported my position, Ms. Tomasa Gifford always took the time to explain why or why not.

Ms. Tomasa Gifford has shown leadership in supervisory position. Beyond her resume, I have always been appreciative for the way she treats people, with respect. I believe that Ms. Tomasa Gifford will bring the same diligence, intelligence and fairness to the bench. She will make an excellent judge.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my thoughts on Mr. Tomasa Gifford. I appreciate your time in this very important decision.

Aloha,

Doris Lum

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 7:52:02 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Megan McDonald	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I have worked with Ms. Tomasa since 2019. Her knowneldge of cases, statutes, and HRE are endless. While I would be sad to see her leave the office, I believe she would be an excellent addition to the Judiciary.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 8:16:47 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sat Freedman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support the confirmation of Taryn Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court bench. I've worked with her at the Office of the Public Defender for 18 years. She is intelligent, hard working, and incredibly knowledgeable about the law. I believe she will make an excellent judge.

Thank you,

Sat Freedman

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 8:19:37 AM

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

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

Comments:

Dear members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary,

I am writing in strong support of judicial candidate Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford for the First Circuit Court bench. I have worked with Ms. Tomasa Gifford for a number of years and know her to be intelligent, diligent and caring in her practice of law. She will bring a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience to the job, but most importantly she will exhibit a patient and respectful demeanor to attorneys and litigants in her courtroom. Ms. Tomasa Gifford will be an asset to the judiciary.

Thank you for the ability to comment on this nomination.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 8:40:53 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lynda Camarao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on G.M. 789. **Istrongly support** the Governor's nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to serve as a Circuit Court Judge for the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. She brings with her a wealth of legal knowledge and expertise as well as the experience and understanding of working with and within the court system. I've worked with her for many years and know that she has the judicial temperament needed and will be an excellent addition to our Judicial Branch.

Thank you very much!

Lynda Camarao

2047 Nuuanu Avenue, #704
Honolulu, Hawaii 96817
April 22, 2025

The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Thirty-Third Legislature, Regular Session of 2025
Hawaii State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

RE: GM 789 – Circuit Court of the First Circuit Gubernatorial Appointee -
Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Gabbard, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Deborah Miyasaka-Gushiken and I am in **STRONG SUPPORT OF GM 789** to confirm the appointment of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit for a term of ten years.

I am a friend and former co-worker of Taryn's and have had the privilege of knowing her for approximately thirty years. I met Taryn prior to her attending law school when we were serving as legal advocates with the Hawai'i Lawyers Care AmeriCorps Legal Domestic Violence Clinic. At that time, I saw firsthand her dedication to justice and fairness and to helping others obtain equal access to justice. She also showed compassion and respect, ethical integrity, diligence, patience, and the ability to stand up for what is right, even in difficult situations. Over the years, my opinion has remained the same.

She is a level-headed intelligent logical independent thinker with an incredible work ethic, is an excellent communicator, and has a great ability to build relationships with those around her.

Taryn has a wealth of experience in the legal field, and has been practicing law and been part of the legal community for decades. She has a deep understanding of the law and the judicial system, and has demonstrated a commitment to justice and fairness, public service, and equal access to justice for all citizens.

Taryn's legal background and judicial experience as well as her personal qualities make her well suited to serve as a Circuit Court judge.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support of GM 789** to confirm Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

Sincerely,



Deborah Miyasaka-Gushiken

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 8:57:11 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaitlyn Iwashita	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting this letter in support of Taryn R. Tomasa-Gifford's nomination for the judicial vacancy in the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

I first met Taryn in 2018 at the Office of the Public Defender when I was a third-year law student interning at the office fulltime. Taryn already had a reputation as a seasoned trial attorney and an experienced member of the appellate division. I was impressed not only by her professionalism and skills as an attorney, but also by her dedication to public service. In my opinion, she is honest, straightforward, and committed to ensuring justice.

At the time, Taryn directly supervised me while working together on a writ of certiorari that was later submitted and accepted to the Supreme Court of Hawai'i. While working on this writ together, Taryn demonstrated her excellent legal reasoning and her ability to carefully and dedicatedly craft legal argument.

Since I joined the Office of the Public Defender as a deputy public defender in 2021, Taryn has been one of my closest confidantes and mentors. When Taryn took over as District Court Supervisor in 2024, I was assigned to the District Court division. Taryn made the transition from line deputy to supervisor smoothly, harnessing her skills as a senior attorney to facilitate a new era of leadership. My time with Taryn as a supervisor highlighted her strong mentorship skills and dedication to imparting her knowledge and experience to young legal professionals. In particular, Taryn emphasized the development of a clear, concise writing style and a firm understanding of policy, law, and the implications of precedent in building a trial attorney skillset.

Taryn is an incredible attorney who possesses great intellect, a strong commitment to justice, and a desire to further improve upon the practice of law. She would be an enormous asset to the Judiciary.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mahalo,

Kaitlyn M. H. Iwashita, Esq.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:00:26 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Liane Nomura-Siu	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear members of the Hawaii State Legislature and Judicial Committee,

I am writing in strong and enthusiastic support of Taryn Tomasa Gifford to serve as a Circuit Court Judge in the Circuit Court of the First Circuit (Island of Oahu), State of Hawaii.

Taryn is currently a supervising attorney in the Office of the Public Defender, where she is committed to ensuring fair representation for all. Taryn also clerked at Circuit Court and the Intermediate Court of Appeals for Judge John Lim.

I was lucky enough to clerk alongside Taryn for Judge Lim, so I know first-hand that Taryn is a dedicated and hard worker. Taryn was always able to quickly research and draft well-reasoned, clear and astute opinions, tackling a high volume of complex cases at a time. Passionate about the law, she also has the intelligence, temperament and thoughtfulness necessary to be a great judge.

With extensive litigation and appellate experience, Taryn is eminently qualified to serve as a Circuit Court Judge. If confirmed, Taryn will bring her strong work ethic and commitment to upholding the law to the bench.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of Taryn.

-Liane Nomura-Siu

JAMES S. TABE

P.O. BOX 893846
MILILANI, HAWAI‘I 96789

April 22, 2025

GM 789: Submitting for consideration and confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit, Gubernatorial Nominee, Taryn R. Tomasa, for a term to expire in 10 years

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard and Members of the Committee:

I fully support the confirmation of Taryn R. Tomasa, Gubernatorial Nominee, to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Ms. Tomasa since 1999 when she first joined the Office of the Public Defender. During my time with the Office of the Public Defender in the Appellate Division, I worked closely with Ms. Tomasa. I can say without reservation that, if confirmed, Ms. Tomasa will be an outstanding jurist.

Ms. Tomasa is highly qualified to serve on the circuit court bench. She holds herself to high standards of preparation and performance. She possesses a strong work ethic, and her knowledge of the law is impressive. She has the intellect and the ability to grasp complex legal issues and communicate her ideas in a thoughtful, eloquent and persuasive manner, as evidenced by her appellate briefs and her participation in oral arguments before the Hawai‘i Supreme Court and the Intermediate Court of Appeals.

In addition to possessing the intellect and a strong work ethic, Ms. Tomasa has the temperament, character, and sensitivity to be a successful circuit court judge. Ms. Tomasa is truly a decent, thoughtful, and generous person. I have on occasion witnessed her interactions with her clients at the jail/prison. She treats her clients with respect, compassion, and dignity. She understands that her clients, who are charged (or convicted) with the most serious of crimes, are at their most vulnerable. At the same time, she is honest and straightforward with them.

Ms. Tomasa has also always been generous with her time to help her fellow co-workers, as the attorneys in the office, including myself, routinely sought her counsel and judgment on legal matters. She also makes it a point to spend time

with the inexperienced attorneys and with the law school and college interns. She has helped, counseled and mentored many attorneys over the years. I have no doubt that she will treat those who appear before her with dignity, patience, respect and compassion.

Ms. Tomasa is also well respected among her peers in the legal community for her insight, keen intellect, and leadership qualities. Her reputation as an attorney among prosecutors and judges is above reproach. As long as I have known her, Ms. Tomasa has practiced law with competence, zealousness, compassion, integrity and humility. She has demonstrated that she has the ability, the experience and the qualities to be a circuit court judge. Ms. Tomasa will certainly be an asset to the Hawai'i State Judiciary and I respectfully ask the committee to recommend confirmation.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in this matter.

April 21, 2025

TO: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: **GM 789, Testimony in Support of the Confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of
the First Circuit, Judicial Nominee *TARYN R. TOMASA GIFFORD***

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.
Hawai'i State Capitol, Conf. Rm. 225
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Gabbard, Senator Chang, Senator San Buenaventura and Senator
Awa:

I support the nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. Ms. Gifford and I worked together at the Office of the Public Defender for about nine (9) years. During our time as colleagues, we briefly worked together in the Appeals Section. At that time, she was a fellow deputy. Ms. Gifford took the initiative to provide me with extensive training and mentorship. At that time, I was just starting out in my legal career; her mentorship, compassion, and patience helped to shape where I am today.

As I transitioned to different sections within the Office of the Public Defender, Ms. Gifford continued with her open-door policy. She always welcomed my questions and provided a wealth of knowledge regarding criminal procedure and case law. Ms. Gifford was a great resource when I needed help with legal research and she is an exceptional writer. During my time doing felony trials, Ms. Gifford was one of my go-to colleagues when I wanted to brainstorm a case. She would always make time to assist me and went out of her way to follow up on the cases that we brainstormed.

I am confident that Ms. Gifford will make an excellent judge for the Circuit Court of the First Circuit because she possesses integrity, diligence, legal knowledge and ability, and professional experience. Most of all, Ms. Gifford has the skills to efficiently manage a court calendar and uphold the current law while making fair, reasonable, and objective decisions.

I have seen first-hand that Ms. Gifford is extremely organized and is able to handle stressful situations in a professional and ethical manner, but while providing empathy and a personal touch. She always remembers birthdays, she asks how your family is doing, and most important, she checks up on you. In my personal opinion, I believe her people skills come not only from years of experience in serving the indigent community, but also from being a mother. Ms. Gifford is not only a lawyer, but a real person with life experience—that experience will translate perfectly to serving on the bench.

I support Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford's nomination to Circuit Court of the First Circuit and am excited to watch her further flourish in her legal career.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sheena Crail
Sheena Crail, Esq.

LATE

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 9:53:20 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Sagaysay	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I submit my written testimony in strong SUPPORT of the appointment of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

I have known Taryn for 30 years. We first met as first year law students and became very close friends. Later, I was fortunate enough to work with Taryn at the Office of the Public Defender. Throughout the years, I have witnessed her excellent work ethic and strong character.

Taryn is a very hardworking and dedicated attorney. She has demonstrated a keen aptitude for the law and legal analysis serving clients in both government and private practice. She is extremely bright and conscientious of her work product. Taryn is a competent lawyer who has tried many cases successfully. She is also a very skillful appellate attorney who has excellent research, writing and oral advocacy skills.

Taryn not only possesses a solid work ethic, but also a strong character. She is one of the most ethical, caring and insightful attorneys and person I have ever worked with and met. Most importantly, she connects with and appreciates all people. She is empathetic, humble and understands the needs and concerns of every day individuals. She has always treated people with honesty, fairness and compassion. As a supervisor and line deputy, Taryn has always been a team player, offering her support and assistance to her deputies and colleagues. Throughout her career, she has also treated the Court and counsel with utmost respect. In turn, she has gained the trust and respect of her clients, colleagues, deputies and the Court.

Taryn's personal life is one of dedication to her husband, sons, family and community. Public service has always been of great importance to her. She has committed a large portion of her legal career to public service, while balancing the needs of her family. Her years in public service has been invaluable to the people of the State of Hawaii.

Taryn has the credentials, the experience and character to effectively serve the people of Hawaii as its next Circuit Court Judge. I am honored to have worked with her, but most importantly to call her my dear friend. Without hesitation, I strongly support her nomination.

LATE

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 10:16:04 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kyle Kawamoto	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I have know Taryn Tomasa's for a significant number of years, fostering a connection that transcends the typical coworker dynamic; I genuinely value her as a friend. One of Taryn's most admirable qualities is her insightful judgment of character, a trait I've come to rely on and respect. Beyond her professional acumen, she creates a supportive and open environment, always making herself available not only for enjoyable and uplifting conversations but also for delving into intense issues and complex problems with genuine empathy and understanding. Her willingness to listen without judgment makes her an invaluable colleague and a cherished friend.

Sincerely,

Kyle Kawamoto

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 3:58:42 PM

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

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacquelyn Esser	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I **strongly support** the nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. Ms. Tomasa is a dedicated, thoughtful, and intelligent attorney who is deeply committed to justice. Her strong work ethic, sound judgment, and even temperament make her exceptionally well-qualified to serve on the bench.

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/21/2025 4:20:52 PM

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

LATE

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Alan Akao	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Committee,

I submit this testimony in strong support for the nomination of Taryn Tomasa Gifford to the Circuit Court of the First Circuit. As a member of the Office of the Public Defender and former supervisor, I believe Taryn Tomasa Gifford is an excellent candidate to serve as a Judge of the First Circuit. She's had a long and committed career in the field of law and has shown a passion for the law and for public service.

She carries herself with professionalism, thoughtfulness and has shown throughout her career that she believes in the considerate review of the law and the application of the law for the public good.

I'd ask this committee to find she is qualified and confirm her nomination.

Mahalo.

TRISHA Y. NAKAMURA

P.O. Box 61619, Honolulu, Hawai'i 96839 • trishanakamura@gmail.com

LATE

To: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

Date: April 21, 2025

Hrg: April 22, 2025 at 9:15 a.m.

Re: GM 789; Strong Support for the Nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Taryn R. Tomasa Gifford for her nomination as Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit ("Circuit Court").¹ I first came to know Taryn during my time as a Deputy Public Defender. For more than five years, Taryn was a "go-to" for information on procedure, evidentiary issues, and the law in general. Her intelligence and appreciation of the importance of the rule of law will be invaluable to the work at Circuit Court.

UNDENIABLY INTELLIGENT LEGAL PRACTITIONER

Taryn is smart. She gets the law. She cares about the Hawai'i State and the United States Constitutions. She understands that cases are about people and the rule of law.

For my first few years at the Office of the Public Defender, I was assigned to the appellate section, of which Taryn was a senior attorney. After being assigned a case and having read the transcripts and various documents associated with the case, I was a frequent visitor to Taryn's office. She had a knack of understanding what did or didn't happen at the trial court level—and what that meant in terms of the law. I came to rely on the brainstorming sessions with Taryn. Her seasoned wisdom helped mold the ways I would think of trials.

Taryn's expertise as an appellate attorney will be invaluable to the Circuit Court. She will demand a high level of practice of the attorneys who appear before her, thus improving justice for all of the parties involved in cases.

TARYN POSSESSES A STRONG WORK-ETHIC AND DEEP OBLIGATION TO DUTY

Taryn has a deep care about the community and pursues this commitment through her work as an attorney. Going into the office early to work on a brief was standard practice for Taryn. She worked hard to write the most powerful briefs, to prepare herself or others for oral arguments, and to meet clients before parole hearings. Even when dealt the worst cases or working with clients who had been convicted of the most awful crimes, Taryn treated every matter with compassion, candor, and care. She put in the time for all of her clients because every client mattered and because it was her role as their attorney. I know that as a Circuit Court judge, Taryn will put her duty as a judge first, setting aside bias and applying the rule of law to each situation.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of Taryn R. Tomasa as Circuit Judge of the First Circuit.

¹ This testimony is submitted in my personal capacity.

LATE

GM-789

Submitted on: 4/22/2025 8:45:21 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ana Kia	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of GM 789, submitting for consideration and confirmation the appointment of Taryn Tomasa Gifford to serve as Circuit Court Judge for the First Circuit. Ms. Tomasa Gifford is widely respected for her integrity, deep knowledge of the law, and unwavering commitment to justice. I had the opportunity to work with Taryn at the Office of the Public Defender. She has consistently demonstrated compassion, fairness, and professionalism throughout her career.

Testimony of the
HAWAII STATE BAR ASSOCIATION
relating to the nomination of

Taryn R. Tomasa
Circuit Court Judge of the First Circuit (GM789)

TO: The Honorable Karl Rhoads, Chair
The Honorable Mike Gabbard, Vice-Chair
and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Mark M. Murakami
President, Hawaii State Bar Association

Hearing: Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 9:15 a.m.
Conference Room 225 and Videoconference
State Capitol

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA) Board of Directors' comments on GM 789, Nomination of Taryn R. Tomasa for Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the First Circuit.

After a rigorous process, described below, the HSBA Board of Directors concluded that Ms. Tomasa is **QUALIFIED**. Ms. Tomasa has served in various capacities at the Office of the Public Defender for over two decades. She has worked through the ranks to her current position of Supervising Deputy Public Defender. Her background and experience has exemplified her dedication to public service and the betterment of our community.

The HSBA Board of Directors followed its multi-step process to arrive at its conclusion, which included:

- The nominee was notified of the HSBA appointment review process, which includes a questionnaire requesting educational credentials, legal and other professional work experiences, and personal references; a resume; a copy of the Judicial Selection Commission (JSC) application; a form authorizing disclosure from the Office of Disciplinary Counsel of any disciplinary action; and an interview with the HSBA Board of Directors.
- The HSBA membership received an electronic notification of the appointment and a request for comments on the nominee.
- A neutral fact-finding body comprised of three HSBA Board members was called upon to review documentation submitted by the nominee, contact references submitted by the nominee review comments received from the HSBA membership, conduct follow-up for clarification, if necessary, and prepare a report for the HSBA Board.
- Ms. Tomasa submitted documentation, which was reviewed, and the references listed were contacted for their personal opinions and observations. The comments and letters received from HSBA members reflected an affirmation of Ms. Tomasa in all categories of the

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HSBA criteria, which include Integrity, Diligence, Legal knowledge and ability, Professional experience, Temperament, Financial responsibility, Public service, and Ability to fulfill the responsibilities and duties of the position.

- The Executive Director and I met with Ms. Tomasa on April 17, 2025, to discuss the subcommittee's findings.
- On April 21, 2025, the HSBA Board of Directors interviewed Ms. Tomasa in executive session.
- The HSBA Board deliberated and voted that Ms. Tomasa was qualified.

Thank you for your time and allowing the HSBA to share our process and determination of qualification.