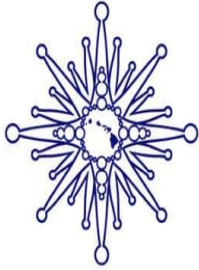


Submitted by Marilyn Yamamoto



HAWAII COALITION
FOR
CHILD PROTECTIVE REFORM

JC28 hearing
April 11, 2025

Senator Rhoads and committee members,

I am the founder of the Hawaii Coalition for Child Protective Reform and wish to testify in **opposition to the appointment of a judgeship to Sonja H. Toma.** Michelle Lelle came to us for help with her involvement in a CWS case. I followed that case until her child was finally returned to her after the most egregious incidents occurred to that child. The removal of her child was a violation of the 4th amendment search and seizure protections and that was only the beginning of the outrageous actions by the department.

The DAG for this case was Sonja Toma whose responsibility was to provide accurate and complete information to the court “under penalty of perjury”. Sonja was in noncompliance with her duties as DAG and therefore cannot be trusted to the duties of family court judge.

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/7/2025 6:06:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melody Rolnick	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

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

FROM: Melody Rolnick

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

I am submitting testimony in strong opposition to the confirmation of Sonya H. Toma to the District Family Court of the Second Circuit.

Ms. Toma’s previous role as a Deputy Attorney General in the Family Law Division on Maui presents a clear and disqualifying conflict of interest. In that role, she represented the Department of Human Services, particularly Child Protective Services (CPS), in legal matters involving family court proceedings.

In effect, CPS was her client — she argued in favor of the agency’s positions, including the removal of children, supervision orders, and other highly sensitive matters. If confirmed to the bench, Ms. Toma would now be tasked with ruling on the same types of cases — often involving CPS — from a judicial seat rather than an advocacy role.

The appearance of impartiality is essential to public trust. Families must believe their case will be evaluated fairly and without bias. But it is difficult, if not impossible, for families to feel that confidence when the judge assigned to their case previously advocated for the very agency they are now opposing.

For this reason, I respectfully urge the Committee to vote no on the confirmation of Ms. Toma. Maui families deserve a Family Court judge who is not only experienced, but also neutral and independent in every sense.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Sincerely,

Melody Rolnick

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 8:05:51 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Lelle	Individual	Oppose	In Person

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing an opposition to the appointment of Sonya Toma becoming a family court Judge in Maui County.

I am one of the 81% of families in this state who had a child removed that was never harmed prior to entering the family court system. My child was removed from my home while I was changing naked in my bedroom without a court order, without a warrant. When I located at the agent, I was tricked into believing that he was going to transport my son to a treatment center. I had arranged for prior. In fact, the agent drove away with my son. I watched him drive away, and when I left, thinking, he was safe on his way to treatment. The agent drove back to my parking lot and met the police claiming that I drove off and that I was a danger to my son. Without ever seeing me, without ever seeing my son, within 2 1/2 minutes according to the body cam footage the police officer took the word of the agent and signed away my custody destroying my family forever. Sonya Toma was the Attorney General during the entire case that dragged on for almost two years.

During the case, Sonya Toma repeatedly signed under penalty of perjury that my son was safe under Hawaii supervision. I believe this is ground for her, not being appointed.

During my son's captivity under the state of Hawaii, he was starved for three weeks in foster care. He lost 21lbs those first 3 weeks. Then Rushed to the hospital after my many, pleas of begging for them to weigh my son as he was telling me about the abuse. I had recordings where my son shared with me that the agent told him it was OK to lie and that if he said he didn't feel safe with me living at home that he would be allowed to smoke cannabis and the foster home. And then he told me that they let him. My son's neglect, and abuse in the system only escalated. To make things worse they also had him read pre-written statements in court . It reminded me of hostage situations in countries that you United States claims are terrorists.

Within a couple of months of being in the system, my child ran away and was on the streets. When he was found, he tested positive for meth and declared he had tried to hang himself and slit his own wrists.

Despite having court orders in Colorado for my ex-husband to not even have unsupervised phone calls, let alone visits. Despite the fact that he owed over \$130,000 in back child support, Without ever meeting my ex-husband in person, without ever inspecting his home and ignoring the court orders of Colorado for reunification that I presented to the courts under Sonya Toma's supervision they purchased my ex-husband a plane ticket and took my son to Colorado without following Federal ICPC protocols.

My ex very quickly abused my son verbally, and berated him for his sexual orientation. Again, I made pleas in the court that fell on deaf ears by Sonya Toma. Within six weeks, my son had been arrested for Cannabis at school and ran away. Despite him becoming homeless and missing no amber alert or missing persons report was filed. Sonya Toma continued declaring the false narrative and drafting multiple orders, granted under penalty of perjury declaring that he was safe under Hawaii's supervision with my ex-husband in Colorado and receiving services.

He did not receive any services. He was declared a dropout of high school. After a few weeks, the terrifying phone calls in the middle of the night began escalating. He called telling me he was freezing on the side of the highway in a tent too weak to stand. I plead with him to get up and to get on a public bus so at least he could have heat because the temperatures were below freezing. He then called me and told me he was going to be leaving the country with a transsexual Russian that he met on the streets. A week later he called me and told me he was robbed with a gun on a train after they rode it to Texas and back in a freight cart. The following week he told me he fell on a cactus running down a hill as he was hearing a woman get murdered. He slept in an elevator with homeless smoking fentanyl. A week later he told me he witnessed murder and then I was contacted and told he was working in a circus in Alabama. All of this was declared to the courts yet under penalty of perjury the orders were signed as Sonya Toma consistently declared under penalty of perjury that he was safe under Hawaii supervision receiving services in Colorado. After he was located at the circus, he fled in the middle of the night and ended up with my family in Florida. He slipped deeper into drugs, despite my plea in and out of court, declaring that he was self dosing DMT, psilocybin, LSD and cannabis. I was completely ignored, and he was consistently still declared as Safe under Hawaii supervision in Colorado. I believe this to be perjury and in my opinion, it sounds like financial fraud of Medicaid or title IV or some sort of government funding.

I believe if DOGE where to examine case FCS2110052 and watch the DVD's (specifically November 2,2021 for the ICPC / Colorado court violations), January 2022-March 2022 (declaring he was safe while missing) and October 31-November 2022 details of circus and drugs)(Nov2022- April 2023 repeated declarations of LSD, Psilocybin, and DMT use) that in my opinion Sonya Toma likely would be investigated for the false claims / perjury / that he was safe

during all of these times, which are documented on DVDs and on transcripts. I emailed Governor Josh Green, Cathy Betts, Elladine Olivao and many others throughout the case the details of horror we endured. I'm happy to provide those emails.

My son return to me two years later after I located him in the ghetto of South Carolina, where their child welfare services took him from police that I called to save him. They flew him to the airport and dumped with me at the airport without checking an ID or any sort of verification that I was his parent.

He was and still is heavily addicted to drugs and traumatized in and out of hospitals, and homelessness as I try to bring him back home and into treatment. I have no options as he no longer trusts anyone associated with the Department of health and human services for medical care or mental health care.

The evil that I witnessed in that courtroom and the suffering, my family has endured at the hands of Sonya Toma under penalty of perjury are what I believe is grounds to not appoint Sonya Toma as a judge.

Whatever decision you make, remember God is watching, God sees all, Our children of Hawaii deserve protection from evil, And your choice to place a judge that will affect thousands of family in Hawaii is also on your soul.

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/8/2025 11:53:27 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lori Tshako	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am Lori Tshako, a Licensed Professional social worker and currently the Director of the County of Maui's Department of Human Concerns. I write in **STRONG SUPPORT** of the nomination of Sonya H. Toma to the District Family Court of the Second Circuit.

I have known Ms. Toma for several years and have had the pleasure of working with her on numerous occasions. Ms. Toma has excellent interpersonal skills and treats people with dignity and respect. She is intelligent, thoughtful, and able to listen to others. These qualities have made her an effective attorney, and also speak to her readiness and ability to assume the role of a District Family Court judge.

I ask that you give Ms. Toma's nomination your highest consideration and support.

R. HERMANN HEIMGARTNER

ATTORNEY AT LAW LLC



P.O. BOX 1839

KAILUA-KONA, HI 96745

PHONE & TEXT: (808) 756-7022

FAX: (808) 443-0061

EMAIL: HERMANN@KONA.ATTORNEY

April 6, 2025

State of Hawai'i Senate
Committee on Judiciary

RE: GM 767 – Consideration and confirmation as Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the Third Circuit (Island of Hawai'i), KAUANOE D. JACKSON.

Dear Chair Rhoads and Vice Chair Gabbard,

I **strongly support** the consideration and confirmation of KAUANOE D. JACKSON as Circuit Court Judge of the Circuit Court of the Third Circuit (Island of Hawai'i).

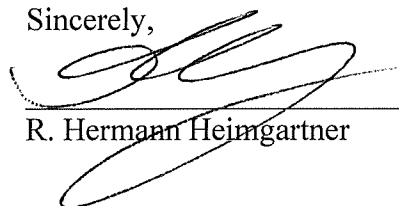
I am a 2008 graduate of the University of Hawai'i – William S. Richardson School of Law. After graduation and passing the bar, I worked as a deputy prosecuting attorney on Kauai, as a deputy public defender in West Hawai'i, and since 2015 as a private attorney in Kona. My private practice focuses on criminal defense. I regularly accept State court appointed cases, and I am on the Federal Criminal Justice Act (CJA) panel.

I have litigated numerous criminal cases against Ms. Jackson in Kona's Circuit Courts, including criminal jury trials. She has always been a most honorable and fair deputy prosecuting attorney to litigate case against. She is a very skilled advocate in the courtroom, an excellent researcher/writer, and seasoned trial attorney. Clearly, she has the intelligence, the experience, the education, and the knowledge to be a Circuit Court judge.

In addition to being a great attorney and prosecutor, there are three additional reasons that I highly recommend Ms. Jackson as a Circuit Court Judge. First, as a deputy prosecuting attorney, Ms. Jackson has always been mindful of her primary obligation to seek justice, not merely convictions. Just as she embraced the role of seeking justice as a deputy prosecutor, she will embrace the role of a fair, impartial, and unbiased judge. Second, Ms. Jackson has a very balanced temperament and composure. From plea negotiations to the midst of jury trial, Ms. Jackson has always been calm and professional. Third, Ms. Jackson cares deeply about our community and the persons in it. As a deputy prosecuting attorney, she has served the community for many years, and as a judge, she will continue to serve the community. The role of a judge comes with many weights, and I am grateful that Ms. Jackson is willing to continue to serve our community as a judge.

Please feel free to contact me at (808) 756-7022 or hermann@kona.attorney if you have any additional questions that I may answer regarding Ms. Jackson's nomination as Circuit Court judge. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



R. Hermann Heimgartner



WENDY HUDSON • ATTORNEY AT LAW
44 N. MARKET STREET, WAILUKU, HI 96793
PH. 808-242-1999 • FAX 808-244-5698
WENDYHUDSONLAW@GMAIL.COM
WENDYHUDSONLAW.COM

April 9, 2025

Re: Sonya Toma - Second Circuit District Family Court Judge Nomination

I'm writing to recommend and enthusiastically support Sonya Toma for Second Circuit District Family Court Judge. I've known Sonya for over 25 years and have appreciated her growth as an attorney throughout that time.

She is a perfect choice for this position as she is thoughtful, compassionate, honest, full of integrity and is good with people. She is a leader yet is subtle in her direction. She's humble and is always prepared in Court. She is even keeled and calm. She holds her composure even in adverse circumstances. I supervised her when she was at the Public Defender's Office on Maui and always found her to be a model employee. She's a delight to work with, even when she is opposing counsel.

Her breadth of legal knowledge is wide and vast (Deputy Public Defender, Deputy Attorney General, Deputy Prosecutor, Private Family Law Attorney, County Leadership...) and she would be an asset to the bench. Frankly, she would be a breath of fresh air as well. The Maui bench would surely benefit if she joins them.

Mahalo,

/s/ Wendy A. Hudson

Wendy Hudson

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/9/2025 2:19:54 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Kunkel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly recommend that you confirm Sonya Toma as a judge for the Family Court on Maui. I have personally worked with Sonya Toma at the Maui Department of the Prosecuting Attorney. Sonya Toma is very level-headed and experienced litigator. She has worked as both a prosecutor and as a public defender, so she personally knows both sides of criminal litigation. Furthermore, during my tenure at the Maui Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, Sonya Toma has handled a large volume of cases with skill, careful thought and diligence. She is not a lazy woman. I aspire to be like Sonya Toma.

I realize that the Family Court judge must adjudicate civil cases, but Sonya Toma has the necessary humility to be in a learning mode at any new job. I have no doubt that Sonya Toma would maintain the appropriate decorum, dignity and procedure in the Family Court during inevitably contentious divorce proceedings. My only regret in watching Sona Toma become a judge would be my personal regret in losing her as a co-worker. Our Maui community needs judges like Sonya Toma.

I recommend that you confirm Sonya Toma as a Family Court judge.

Sincerely,

Dan Kunkel

137 Meheu Circle

Kahului, Hawaii 96732

Telephone No. 808-372-3330

P.O. Box 749
Kula, Hawai'i 96790

April 9, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads
Judiciary Committee Chair
State Capitol Building, Room 204
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Rhoads:

I am writing in support of Sonya H. Toma who is nominated to fill a vacancy in the district family court in the Second Judicial Circuit in JC28.

I have known Sonya since 2009 here in Maui. I worked with Sonya at the Maui Office of the Public Defender. As a deputy public defender, she handled cases that involved felony and misdemeanor charges. Oftentimes, these cases dealt with a myriad of complex defense issues including pretrial motions and defenses presented at trial. Sonya was an experienced courtroom litigator who did not shy away from difficult cases. Her pretrial motions practice was excellent and was equally effective in front of juries. She was knowledgeable with the Hawaii Rules of Evidence and the substantive criminal law.

Most recently, Sonya and I worked at the Department of the Attorney General – Maui Family Law Division. As a Deputy Attorney General, Sonya used her prior experience and legal knowledge to advise multiple departments of the State of Hawaii. She was highly respected as an advocate for our agency clients.

Sonya will bring a wealth of experience to the bench. More impressively, Sonya will bring compassion and understanding as a judge. She will be able to form an understanding and rapport with the litigants who appear in her courtroom. Her decisions will be well reasoned, compassionate and from a genuine place of understanding. She will use this understanding and compassion as part of her judicial temperament.

Sonya possesses the intellect and demeanor to make an outstanding district and family court judge for the community of Maui and I hope you consider her nomination strongly.

Sincerely,

Adriel C. S. Menor

JESSICA T. TAKITANI-MOSES, ESQ.

j.takitanimoses@gmail.com

April 9, 2025

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

Thank you for your time and consideration in reading my letter of **wholehearted support** for Sonya Toma as a Family Court Judge in the Second Circuit.

Sonya has a unique and admirable ability to navigate the legal profession with integrity, intelligence, humility, and compassion. She has dedicated her whole being to public service and has worked tirelessly in every capacity that she has served in to ensure that justice is pursued with fairness and compassion.

I have had the absolute honor of working directly with Sonya at the County of Maui, Department of the Prosecuting Attorney's office. Sonya has been a great mentor and is an amazing source of knowledge. She has personally helped me to learn court procedures and how to prepare for trials. In fact, one of my favorite memories with Sonya is from a time where I was just beginning my career, and she so graciously volunteered to sit with me through my first trial. One of the most valuable things that I learned from this experience is how Sonya consistently analyzes legal issues from multiple angles to ensure that she is making a sound and fair decision.

Additionally, in my time working with Sonya, I have watched how her work-ethic and passion naturally pushes everyone around her to want to do more and be better. I observed her speak with victims, witnesses, and pro se defendants with empathy, yet firmly, and with respect. Her balanced temperament allows her to manage high-stress situations with grace. Her ability to be pragmatic and rational stems in large part from her propensity to listen to others and think things through based on legal principles before making decisions. I am very thankful to have witnessed, first-hand, professionalism with heart.

Further, it is important to note that Maui is in dire need of someone who has first-hand knowledge of the needs that those in our community have. Maui's community has a unique set of issues, even more so after the August 2023 fires in Lahaina. It is a very delicate time in the history of our island and what is needed above all, is someone who understands and cares about this community the way that Sonya does. Not only was she raised on Maui, but she is also raising her children here, too. Her awareness of the challenges that our community is facing and her deep respect for the history of Hawai'i just adds to her qualifications for this position.

I am deeply confident that she would serve the people of Maui County with compassion and integrity, while making informed and fair decisions. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of Sonya Toma.

Respectfully,



Jessica T. Takitani-Moses

LAW OFFICES OF
SETSUKO REGINA GORMLEY, LLC

P.O. Box 6220, Kahului, Maui, Hawaii 96733 • Telephone/Fax: (808) 463-3744
Email: ginagormleylaw@gmail.com

April 9, 2025

Senator Karl Rhoads
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State of Hawaii Senate
State Capitol, Room 228
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Via Email to: senrhoads@capitol.hawaii.gov

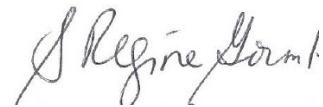
Re: Nomination to the Defender Council, J.C. 28

Dear Senator Rhoads:

I had the honor of working with Sonya Toma at the Office of the Public Defender. Ms. Toma is a dedicated attorney who is passionate about the law. At the Public Defender's office, she was always researching case law, brainstorming case law and strategies, and was always a mentor to everyone. Ms. Toma is enthusiastic and passionate like no other.

Ms. Toma is extremely knowledgeable about the law and has exceptional speaking and writing skills. It would do our community a great service to have Ms. Toma sit on the bench. She can be fair and unbiased. Her humbleness coupled with her knowledge of the law are qualities that we need in judges. She would serve Hawaii right.

Respectfully,



Setsuko Regina Gormley

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/9/2025 4:14:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronson Ibarra	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

April 9, 2024

Dear Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Sonya Toma as Family Court Judge of the Second Circuit. Ms. Toma is the most qualified candidate for this position based on her experience as a Family Law Attorney, Deputy Attorney General, Deputy Public Defender, First Deputy Corporation Counsel, Kids First Parent Co-Facilitator, and now Deputy Prosecuting Attorney.

As Circuit Court Supervisor for the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney, County of Maui, I have had the pleasure of Ms. Toma working in my division over the last six (6) months. During that time, I have witnessed firsthand her unwavering commitment to justice, fairness, and the well-being of victims and families in our community. Ms. Toma was a perfect fit in our Family Court Domestic Violence Unit. Her vast experience helped to provide a seamless transition to her prosecution of FCCR cases such as Felony Abuse by Strangulation, Felony Abuse - Presence of a Minor, Abuse of a Family or Household Member (MD/PM), Violation of a Protective Order / TRO Violation, as well as many other general felonies in Circuit Court.

Ms. Toma possesses a unique blend of professional experience, integrity, and compassion that would make her an excellent addition to our family court bench. She brings a deep understanding of family law and has consistently demonstrated the ability to handle sensitive and complex matters with both legal expertise and empathy. Having spent the vast majority of her life in Hawai'i, Sonya is a local girl with local values who knows local culture. Her years of experience with personally working with local families is unmatched. Our office staff and Judiciary staff just love her. She always keeps our office in mind, brings in snacks for the staff and makes time to "talk story" when can.

I have full confidence that Ms. Toma will bring the highest standards of excellence, integrity, and compassion to the role of Family Court Judge. She has consistently demonstrated the qualities that are essential for this position—respect for the law, empathy for those involved in family court matters, and an unwavering dedication to justice.

I highly recommend Ms. Toma without reservation and urge you to support her confirmation for Family Court Judge of the Second Circuit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ronson Ibarra

*Barbara Sauer
Attorney At Law
4955 Makena Rd, E202
Kihei, Hawaii 96753
(808) 875-9499*

April 9, 2025

Hawaii State Senate Judiciary Committee
Hawaii State Capitol

Via Email: JDCcommittee@capitol.hawaii.gov

RE: JC 28: CONFIRMATION OF SONYA TOMA TO THE MAUI FAMILY COURT

Dear Senator Rhodes and Committee Members:

The purpose of this letter is to acquaint you with Attorney Sonya Toma who is scheduled to meet with you later this week as she seeks confirmation to the Second Circuit Family Court on Maui.

I have had the opportunity and pleasure of being acquainted with Sonya for twenty plus years. She is an extremely talented individual who possesses many of the qualities which will make her an outstanding addition to the Second Circuit Bench.

As an attorney she is highly respected by the members of the Maui County Bar. Her ethics are above reproach, and her work ethic is exemplary. If she has an ego it is a healthy component of her personality that will never be on display in a negative manner which is not always true of folks wearing black robes.

In addition to her strong intellect, she is experienced in several areas of the law which will be relevant to her service on the Family Court. The designation "Family Court" does not truly convey the many areas of the law which are present in the constellation of issues presented as Family Law cases. It is not just divorce, support, custody and visitation or Child Welfare issues. Examples of these ancillary matters include, but are not limited to:

1. DOE truancy matters which may stem from absent parents or parents who are active criminals, physically and/or emotionally abusive, substance abusers,

neglectful individuals which results in a lack of parental participation and responsibility, incarcerated, etc., etc.

2. DOH cases involving hospitalization of individuals who are believed to be a danger to themselves or others.
3. DOH cases with children who are the subject of active CPS cases who are in need of mental health services which DOH is reluctant to provide.
4. DHS Elder Abuse Cases which are self-explanatory. In these situations the Deputy Attorney Generals (DAGs) in the Family Law Section are required to represent the Public Guardian in Guardianship Proceedings.
5. Teenage CPS children are often simultaneously on the Juvenile Calendar and the Family Law DAGs are called upon for information and/or assistance in finding a suitable resolution in these cases.
6. CPS parents are frequently also involved in the Criminal Justice system and Sonya's experience and knowledge in both the prosecution and defense bar is a true benefit as the outcome of the criminal matters have a definite impact on the direction and outcome of CPS and non-CPS cases.

While she was a Deputy Attorney General (DAG) in the Maui Family Law Division we interacted on a regular basis as I have a Judiciary Contract to provide legal services to families involved with the Child Welfare System. This area of the law is highly emotionally charged as parents are alleged to be abusers, neglectful, perpetrators of despicable physical and/or emotional harm to their own children. They enter the Court confused, angry and hostile in most cases. Sonya consistently treated parents with respect. Her calm but firm composure is very effective in de-escalating extremely volatile situations.

As opposing counsel, she was always respectful, non-judgmental and open to discussion when we had opposing views in a case. Unlike so many members of the legal profession Sonya does not allow ego to cloud her judgment or conduct which is refreshing and somewhat rare in litigators. She is always prepared including an assessment of her opponents' position. This thorough preparation combined with her extensive legal knowledge resulted in cases being disposed of in a timely manner not having to be continued when an opposing party raises an issue she has not contemplated. She also prepares the CPS workers when they are going to testify so they hopefully had all the documents and relevant information necessary for the hearing to proceed; again avoiding the need to repeatedly continue cases.

Sonya is articulate in both her oral and written communications. When dealing with parties her calm demeanor combined with her ability to translate legalese into lay language which parents can understand and appreciate is exceptional. These characteristics are a requisite to an appropriate judicial temperament. When combined

with her effective communication skills I believe parties will leave her Court knowing they heard and given a fair hearing.

It is also important you are aware of the well rounded and valuable member of society that is Sonya Toma. Her C.V. sets forth her numerous contributions to the legal community. In addition, she is actively engaged in the Okinawan Society of Maui County, the AAUW; a very active parent in both in school and extracurricular activities of her sons. They attend local public middle and high schools. She is involved in fund raising, a great member of the car wash teams, travels as a chaperone, leader, first aid provider, etc. to her sons' various sports teams and the Special Olympics with her eldest son.

When you meet Sonya, you will be able to observe for yourselves what an outstanding person she is. Her appointment to the Family Court of the Second Circuit will reflect positively on your decision-making process and be a tremendous benefit to the citizens of Maui County.

In the event you find this letter too effusive it is written from my experience of practicing law for fifty-nine years and counting.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above number.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

Barbara Sauer

Barbara Sauer
Attorney at Law

April 9, 2025

RE: Letter of Strong Support for the Confirmation of SONYA H. TOMA
for District Family Court Judge, Second Judicial Circuit, State of Hawaii

Dear Honorable Chair Karl Rhoads, Vice Chair Mike Gabbard, and Members of the
Judiciary Committee of the Hawaii State Senate:

I write this letter in strong support for the confirmation of SONYA H. TOMA for District Family Court Judge of the Second Judicial Circuit. I have known Ms. Toma personally and professionally for twenty-two years from when she worked for the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii before she went to law school. After law school, she became licensed in Hawaii, as well as Indiana and Nevada, and has competently worked in various fields of law, including family law and criminal law. She is intelligent, dependable, conscientious, and a good person.

Ms. Toma has practiced in almost, if not every, area in Family Court, such as divorce and child custody, temporary restraining orders, criminal law (in both prosecution and defense), child and adult protective services, involuntary commitments, and truancy cases. It is extremely important and beneficial for the Maui community and the bar that a person with her extensive Family Court experience be confirmed as the next District Family Court Judge on Maui.

I truly believe that Ms. Toma possesses the qualities, character, and experience to serve as an excellent judge in Family Court on Maui. I wholeheartedly endorse her appointment and ask for your favorable consideration of her confirmation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Very truly yours,
Jennifer M.P.E. Oana, Esq.



Richard S. Ekimoto
John A. Morris
Gwenaelle Bratton
Dan C. Oyasato
Nikki Y. Loh
Erik D. Olson
Reginald K. T. Yee
Joshua E. Smith

April 8, 2025

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Honorable Karl A. Rhoads
Hawaii State Senator
Chair, Committee on Judiciary
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Re: Sonya H. Toma, Judicial Nominee

Dear Honorable Senator Rhoads:

Please accept this letter as support for the Hawaii Senate confirmation of Sonya H. Toma to be a District Family Court Judge for the County of Maui.

Ms. Toma is the daughter of Joseph T. Toma, Esq., who is a long-standing member of the Hawaii State Bar Association. Mr. Toma and I have known one another for over 40 years since meeting him as a fellow member of the Honolulu Office of the State of Hawaii Public Defenders. Throughout the years Mr. Toma spoke proudly about his daughter and rightfully so. As a young woman, she took on many roles, and strived to be an example of an upstanding attorney, wife, mother and pillar of the community. In doing so, she overcame many challenges and succeeded despite facing adversity. I am certain that she will continue to be an inspiration for the younger generation of individuals in our community.

I have no doubt that she would be a credit to the Maui County Judicial Bench.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours very truly,

Reginald K.T. Yee
REGINALD K. T. YEE, ESQ.



FW: Ms. Sonya Toma, appointee to the District Family Court of the 2nd Circuit

From Sen. Karl Rhoads <SenRhoads@capitol.hawaii.gov>

Date Mon 4/7/2025 5:27 PM

To Jessie Faige <j.faige@capitol.hawaii.gov>

From: Marcus Sierra <Marcus.Sierra@co.maui.hi.us>

Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 6:18 PM

To: Sen. Karl Rhoads <SenRhoads@capitol.hawaii.gov>; Sen. Mike Gabbard <sengabbard@capitol.hawaii.gov>; Sen. Stanley Chang <SenChang@capitol.hawaii.gov>; Sen. Joy A. San Buenaventura <SenSanBuenaventura@capitol.hawaii.gov>; Sen. Brenton Awa <senawa@capitol.hawaii.gov>

Subject: Ms. Sonya Toma, appointee to the District Family Court of the 2nd Circuit

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Aloha Honorable Senators of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of the confirmation of Ms. Sonya Toma, appointee to the District Family Court of the 2nd Circuit. My name is Marcus Sierra and I have practiced civil and criminal law in Hawaii for 40 years. I can offer what I know of Ms. Toma's integrity, diligence, legal knowledge, temperament, and ability to fulfill the responsibilities and duties of a District Family Court Judge.

I have worked with Ms. Toma for 16 months at the Maui County Prosecutors Office. For the past year, I worked closely with Ms. Toma on a 4-person team assigned to screen, charge, and litigate family court domestic violence cases and circuit court felony matters in Courtroom 4. I also trained with Ms. Toma to serve on the staff of volunteer-attorneys that provide free legal assistance through the Maui Self Help Center to people who cannot afford legal services. In the past, Ms. Toma and I have both worked in family court as civil attorneys and as criminal defense attorneys.

Integrity. Ms. Toma's reputation for integrity in our office is excellent. She is candid, reasonable, fair, and transparent, in her dealings with other attorneys and the public. Ms. Toma is a strong advocate for justice, not just for victims, but for all involved. She is faithful to the laws and procedures that govern our court, and she has earned the trust of everyone in our section to do what is legally correct.

Diligence. Ms. Toma is known in our section for doing quality work at a fast pace. She stays on top of her cases and is always well-prepared in court. Ms. Toma has strong litigation skills and is excellent at trial.

Legal knowledge and ability. Ms. Toma is a valuable contributor in our daily discussions of how to resolve the legal and factual issues in our difficult cases. Ms. Toma is well-versed in analyzing both civil and criminal family law issues, as well interpreting and applying the procedural and evidentiary rules of court. She is also a great resource on the Rules of Professional Responsibility.

Temperament and Ability to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a judge. From what I have witnessed of Ms. Toma, I have no doubt that she has the ability, knowledge, professionalism, patience, understanding, and temperament, to perform the duties and responsibilities of a judge. I think she will be highly ethical, fair-minded, and decisive on the bench.

I strongly support Ms. Toma's appointment to the District Family Court.

Sincerely,

Marcus B. Sierra

Marcus B. Sierra
Attorney 3871

LATE

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 12:56:20 PM
Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sally Tobin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I wholeheartedly support the nomination of Sonya Toma for the District Family Court Judge in the Second Circuit. I've had the pleasure of working with Sonya for the last few years and find her to be professional, personable, level-headed, and reasonable. Sonya seeks to uphold both the letter and the spirit of our laws. And does so with a keen sense of humor and a good measure of kindness. She's from Maui and understands and respects all that that entails. She has - and will continue to - serve our community well!
Respectfully submitted, Sally Tobin

LATE

JC-28

Submitted on: 4/10/2025 2:23:09 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/11/2025 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Loren Tilley	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to wholeheartedly endorse Sonya Toma for appointment as a District Family Court judge in the Second Circuit. Ms. Toma's reputation for excellence in the Maui legal community is well-earned, and I have had the privilege of witnessing her remarkable qualities firsthand. Since meeting her in 2012 while I served as a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for the County of Maui, at which time she worked as a Public Defender, I have interacted with her as opposing counsel, a colleague, and later as an advocate before me during my tenure as a per diem District Family Court judge. These experiences have convinced me of her readiness for this role.

Ms. Toma's integrity is evident in every professional interaction, as is her diligence. She prepares meticulously and delivers arguments with clarity and precision. In the courtroom, Ms. Toma is a persuasive advocate, skillfully blending tenacity with professionalism to negotiate resolutions when feasible or try cases effectively when required.

During my time as a per diem District Family Court judge, I was struck by Ms. Toma's composed demeanor, a quality that would serve her well on the bench. Her fairness, patience, and calm presence allowed her to navigate sensitive matters effectively. She moved cases forward efficiently while prioritizing just outcomes. Though we occasionally differed in perspective, and on the bench I sometimes ruled against her client, her reasoning remained compelling, and her conduct was always beyond reproach.

I recommend Ms. Toma without hesitation. She possesses the integrity, diligence, legal acumen, and temperament to excel as a District Family Court judge. Thank you for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,

Loren K. Tilley



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

Sonya H. Toma
District Family Court Judge of the Second Circuit (JC28)

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: Friday, April 11, 2025
Conference Room 016 and Videoconference
State Capitol

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Hawaii State Bar Association (HSBA) Board of Directors' comments on JC 28, Nomination of Sonya H. Toma for District Family Court of the Second Circuit.

After a rigorous process, described below, the HSBA Board of Directors concluded that Ms. Toma is **QUALIFIED**. Ms. Toma has extensive experience in family law, and has worked as a deputy prosecutor, deputy public defender, deputy attorney general, deputy corporation counsel, and as a legal aid attorney. She has experience in both civil and criminal litigation. Ms. Toma is well respected in and out of the courtroom, and will continue to bring her strong work ethic, leadership skills, dedication to public service, and respect for the law to the District Family Court of the Second Circuit.

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. Toma submitted documentation, which was reviewed, and the

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references listed were contacted for their personal opinions and observations. The comments and letters received from HSBA members reflected an affirmation of Ms. Toma in all categories of the 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. Toma on April 10, 2025, to discuss the subcommittee's findings.
- On April 10, 2025, the HSBA Board of Directors interviewed Ms. Toma in executive session.
- The HSBA Board deliberated and voted that Ms. Toma was qualified.

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