

# KA LĀHUI HAWAI'I KŌMIKE KALAI'ĀINA

BEFORE THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

AUGUST 25, 2021

GOVERNOR'S MESSAGE 2

RELATING TO NOMINATION OF SONJA MCCULLEN TO THE HAWAI'I INTERMEDIATE COURT OF APPEALS

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee,

Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Kōmike Kalai'āina **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** Governor's Message 2 nominating Sonja McCullen, a highly qualified Kanaka Maoli woman, to the Hawai'i Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA). Ensuring there is Kanaka Maoli representation on the second highest court in Hawai'i is important to addressing the systemic racism in Hawai'i's criminal justice system that has resulted in the chronic over-representation of Kanaka Maoli in Hawai'i's prisons, jails and juvenile detention centers.

According to the Office of Hawaiian Affairs report entitled "The Disparate Treatment of Native Hawaiian in the Criminal Justice System" dated September 29, 2010, Kanaka Maoli are "disproportionately impacted at various stages of Hawaii's criminal justice system" (<https://justicepolicy.org/research/the-disparate-treatment-of-native-hawaiians-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>). The report states that Kanaka Maoli are more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses than any other race in Hawai'i even though our people do not use drugs at drastically different rates. Furthermore, given a determination of guilt in the courts, Kanaka Maoli are more likely to receive a prison sentence that is much longer than other races.

Breaking the biased judicial system that historically has worked against (and not for) the native people of this land is a long road which starts with Kanaka Maoli representation in court positions that can make a difference. Having a native woman who is versed in our traditions and political history and who was raised in the largest Kanaka Maoli community in the world will definitely bring an important perspective and insight to the plight of Kanaka Maoli that has been missing for three decades to the ICA.

For these reasons and more we humbly ask that this committee approves GM 2 .

Me ka oiai'o,

M. Healani Sonoda-Pale  
Public Affairs Officer, Ka Lāhui Hawai'i Kōmike Kalai'āina