

University of Hawai'i
Candidate Advisory Council

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April 9, 2026

The Honorable Josh Green
Governor, State of Hawai'i
Executive Chambers
Hawai'i State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Governor Green:

On behalf of the Candidate Advisory Council (CAC) of the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents and in conformity with the provisions of Act 72, Session Laws of Hawai'i, 2013, I am pleased to present the following candidates to you, listed in alphabetical order, to fill the following seat for the term to begin July 1, 2026.

One (1) Hawai'i County seat for a five-year appointment (currently filled by Regent Wayne Higa)

1. Chad Cabral
2. Makai Freitas
3. Wendy Laros

The CAC complied with the statutory requirements and assessed candidates in a confidential, fair, independent, and nonpartisan manner. All candidates, as required by law, were asked to disclose any existing or anticipated contracts or financial transactions with the University of Hawai'i. Finally, with the assistance of licensed and accredited external firms, the CAC had background checks done on each candidate. Based on the applications and CVs submitted, interviews with candidates, contacts with references, and background checks, the CAC believes that these candidates are able and willing to discharge the responsibilities of a member of the Board of Regents.

Brief biographies drafted by the candidates are attached.

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If you have any questions, please call 956-8213 or email at borapp@hawaii.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brigitte Yoshino".

Brigitte Yoshino, Chair
Candidate Advisory Council

Attachments

- c: Senator Ronald Kouchi, President, Hawai'i State Senate
Representative Nadine Nakamura, Speaker, Hawai'i House of Representatives
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair, Senate Committee on Education
Representative Andrew Garrett, Chair, House Committee on Higher Education
Regent Gabriel Lee, Chair, Board of Regents
President Wendy Hensel, University of Hawai'i
Members, Candidate Advisory Council

Chad Cabral

Born and raised on Hawaii Island, Mr. Chad Cabral has over 20-years working professionally in the nonprofit sector specific to Hawaii County and brings a unique understanding of the needs and challenges as faced by many struggling communities and individuals throughout the Island. His nonprofit work in the areas of homelessness, mental health, Native Hawaiian support, and youth development that spans throughout the nine-districts of the County, along with Mr. Cabral's past work experiences in education, college student support services, and educational credentials specific to university higher education offers an invaluable perspective to the Board of Regents body. Mr. Cabral is a graduate of both Hawaii Community College and UH-Hilo, has a Master's Degree in Higher Education Administration, and for the past 10-years has been the Chief Executive Officer for the Boys & Girls Club of the Big Island.

Makai Freitas

My name is Makai Freitas, and I am honored to apply for a position on the Board of Regents. With a strong background in labor, I have developed a deep understanding of Hawai'i's workforce, collective bargaining processes, and the economic realities that many of our students and families face today. This experience has also provided me with valuable insight into the management and oversight of pension funds and healthcare systems.

In my role as a Hawaiian Homes Commissioner, I have had the privilege of working closely with our communities, gaining a deeper understanding of the challenges our families encounter. This responsibility has strengthened my commitment to serve as a voice for our people and to advocate for solutions that create meaningful opportunities and long-term stability.

Wendy Laros

President and CEO Wendy Laros leads the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce, championing business advocacy, strategic leadership, and community impact across West Hawai'i. She oversees an organization representing 460 businesses, working to strengthen the region's economy and expand opportunities for the community. Under her leadership, the Chamber has positioned itself as a strong, united voice for West Hawai'i's business community and a premier organization for networking and business development on Hawai'i Island.

As a proud University of Hawai'i graduate, Laros strongly believes in the power of education to enrich individuals' lives and uplift entire communities. Education shaped her own path and continues to guide her approach to leadership today. While residing in Kona, Wendy earned her undergraduate degree in psychology from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and a graduate degree in education from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, specializing in Learning Design and Technology. She has also taken courses at Hawai'i Community College in Hawaiian studies and accounting, connecting her to its mission of lifelong learning and workforce readiness. Today, she serves on the Hawai'i Community College Advisory Council and the University of Hawai'i at Hilo Community Advisory Board, providing strategic insight and community perspectives to help advance academic programs and strengthen alignment with workforce needs.

Her commitment to community includes serving on the Hawai'i Community Foundation's West Hawai'i Fund Advisory Committee, which promotes resilience for the local community, and the Hawai'i Island Destination Management Action Plan Steering Committee, which works to create a more responsible and community-aligned visitor industry. At the state level, service has centered on economic competitiveness, with the Business Revitalization Task Force established to identify ways to improve Hawai'i's business climate and submit recommendations to the State Legislature. On the federal landscape, she serves on the Community Advisory Council for the U.S. Army Garrison Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA) on Hawai'i Island, offering insight from a business and community perspective. PTA is the Army's premier training range in the Pacific, preparing service members for missions across the Indo-Pacific region.

Beyond Hawai'i, she also serves on the Western Association of Chamber Executives (W.A.C.E.) Board of Directors, where she holds the distinction of a W.A.C.E. Accredited Chamber Executive. In 2025, she earned the Certified Chamber Executive designation from the Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives, the highest professional recognition in the chamber industry.

Throughout her career, Wendy has built island-wide, statewide, and regional networks of trusted relationships with people who drive community impact. She believes Hawai'i's strength lies in relationships rooted in respect and a shared responsibility for this special place. This perspective guides her leadership and the contributions she strives to make for Hawai'i's future.