

Dear Chair Taniguchi and members of the committee,

Re: Ernie K. Wilson, Jr. GM 548

My name is Martina Leialoha Kamaka and I am a family physician and an associate professor at the University of Hawaii, John A. Burns School of Medicine. I wish to submit oral testimony in favor of the nomination of Mr. Ernest K. Wilson.

I have known Ernest Wilson, Uncle Ernie to me, since I was a little girl. You can see from his CV and resume that he has a breadth of experience not only in the workforce, where he started as a short order cook and ended up as a military officer and a US Army Command Food Service Director, but also in academia where he started as a lecturer and ended up as an Associate Chair and even a Dean at various academic institutions both here in Hawaii and on the continent. All of this experience, both in the public and private sector as well as the civilian and military sector, will serve him well as a Regent of the University of Hawaii.

However, I am testifying today, to speak to you about Ernie Wilson, the man and his character. I believe that character traits are as important in this job as experience. Certainly Uncle Ernie is an educator and a businessman, but he is also a family man, a musician, a community volunteer and a "people person." I think of Uncle Ernie when I think of "Mr. Aloha." He is fully grounded in his Native Hawaiian roots and culture and yet, is also a man who can understand other cultures and ways of thinking. He has certainly gained a global perspective having accumulated quite a bit of experience working in the food and beverage and hospitality industry in such varied places as Hawaii, Mississippi, New York and Germany. He is positive, friendly, approachable, caring, smart and incredibly resilient.

Most of you probably don't know that he and his wife lost all of their possessions in Hurricane Katrina. They were living near the shore in Long Beach Mississippi at the time. All that remained of their home after the tidal surges receded was the concrete slab and a Hawaiian flag wrapped around a tree. I'd like to think it represented my Hawaiian uncle standing proud and undefeated. I remember the family rallying to collect copies of photos to replace the family photos they had lost! True to form, Uncle Ernie picked up the pieces of his life and moved on. This is not unusual for him. Life has thrown him many other personal challenges and throughout it all, he is never angry or resentful. He remains calm, rational, patient, supportive, and always positive. This will serve him well as a regent.

I believe these are critical character traits that are needed in a University Regent. We know that there are many current, and future issues impacting the University, many of these will test his ability to stay calm, keep an open mind, listen to all sides of the story, honor each individual no matter what walk of life they come from and in the end, work hard to make a thoughtful, pono, decision. He is an honorable man who cares deeply about his 'ohana, his community, and his Native Hawaiian culture. I am absolutely certain that he will serve the University and his community well. Mahalo for listening to my testimony and I urge you to support his nomination for University of Hawaii Regent.