

CWRM Nominating Committee

Nominate Juanita Reyher-Colon to the Commission on Water Resource Management

Aloha kākou,

My name is Jade Chihara, and I am writing in strong support of Juanita Reyher-Colon's appointment to the Commission on Water Resource Management. I currently work for the Hawai'i Rural Water Association and I submit this testimony on my own behalf as a community member.

I am born and raised in Lahaina, and the issues of water access, protection, and governance are deeply personal to me. I've seen firsthand how decisions around wai impact our communities and how critical the Commission's work is for our future.

As someone currently working in the water field, I have had the privilege of learning under Juanita's leadership. She is not only my supervisor, but a mentor and a respected figure across our industry. She has reached a licensed Grade 4 Distribution System Operator which is the highest level in the state. Juanita brings decades of hands-on experience in both drinking water and wastewater. She is guided by values of her kūpuna, grounded in her roots on Moloka'i, and she consistently makes decisions that are technically sound and community-centered.

Her leadership has shaped my own understanding of water issues in Hawai'i — not just from a policy perspective, but through the day-to-day realities of operating and protecting water systems. It's not just about allotments; it's about understanding the systems, the science, and the responsibility to follow the Hawai'i Water Code — which is imperative in all decisions before the Commission.

Juanita has not only led on the ground — she has led at the table. She previously served on the Maui County Board of Water Supply and currently chairs the Executive Board of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) Hawai'i Section. She has written technical standards for water audits and loss control programs and spearheaded the formation of the Hawai'i Rural Small Water and Wastewater Response Network (HI-SWARN), enhancing statewide emergency preparedness and coordination.

With numerous WUPA permits and the high potential for contested case hearings ahead, I strongly recommend appointing Juanita Reyher-Colon to the Commission. Her technical knowledge, cross-sector experience, and ability to fairly navigate complex permitting processes make her an invaluable asset at this moment.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to submit testimony to support Juanita Reyher-Colon.

Jade Chihara