

SPEAKERS

KEVIN ADANIYA

Kevin Adaniya has been practicing family law since 1996. He's been involved in child welfare law as court-appointed Guardian Ad Litem, counsel for parents and intervenors, a facilitator for EPIC 'Ohana, a member of the Child Protective Act Task Force, a member of the Child Welfare Law Update Planning Committee, and a mediator with the Oahu Child Welfare Mediation Program.

CRYSTAL ASANO

Crystal M. Asano, J.D., has been practicing in the area of Family Law for over 20 years. She began her career as a Deputy Attorney General in the Family Law Division (2002-2004) prior to going into private practice. She has been representing parents in Child Protective Act cases for almost a decade now. She also represents minors and resource caregivers, as well as legal guardians.

TIANNA CELIS-WEBSTER

Tianna is an eager 24-year-old currently pursuing her Psychology degree. Raised on the Big Island, Tianna is currently employed at EPIC 'Ohana as a Pono Process Navigator and works collaboratively to ensure that youth rights are upheld within the Child Welfare Services (CWS) system. Drawing from her own experiences navigating mental health and foster care systems at a young age, Tianna brings a unique perspective to her role, actively participating in crucial conversations aimed at improving system outcomes. In addition to her professional role, Tianna serves as the Vice President of the East Hawai'i HI H.O.P.E.S Youth Leadership Board. HI H.O.P.E.S., is dedicated to educating, advocating, and collaborating for improvements in the foster care system. Tianna's commitment to creating positive change for Hawai'i youth's mental health includes being a Youth Advisor for the National Governor's Association Policy Academy, where she helps create progress towards advancing holistic efforts to protect and support strong youth mental health and emotional well-being across state agencies, including strategies across prevention, awareness, treatment, and community and youth engagement. She is also involved with Mental Health of America's: Youth Policy Accelerator, focusing on advancing youth peer support programs and services nationwide.

CAROLINE COBANGBANG

Caroline Cobangbang is a family law attorney in private practice for over 20 years. Since 2001, she has represented children as a court-appointed guardian ad litem on child welfare cases. Her practice also includes serving as a GAL, a Best Interest Fact Finder, or a parenting coordinator in high-conflict custody cases. Before private practice, she was a managing attorney with Domestic Violence Action Center (formerly Domestic Violence Clearinghouse), and clerked with Corporation Counsel. Caroline is currently a board member of HSBA's Child Law Section, and a member of the Family Law, and Filipino Law sections. If Caroline has free time, she enjoys traveling, cooking, and most of all eating!

HONORABLE REBECCA COPELAND

Rebecca A. Copeland is a District Family Court Judge for the First Circuit. Judge Copeland currently sits in the Juvenile Division, presiding over Child Welfare Act and juvenile criminal cases. She also presides over Truancy Court and the Early Education Intervention Program, and is a former Lead Judge of the Family Court's Special Division. Judge Copeland also serves as Co-Chair of the Hawaii Judiciary's Committee on Equality and Access to the Courts, a Hawaii Justice Foundation Board Member, and on the Access to Justice Commission's Committee on Increasing Pro Bono Services. As a member of the ATJ pro bono service's Committee, she also served as Co-Chair of the Subcommittee on the Appellate Pro Bono Project, which was approved as a permanent program by the Hawaii Supreme Court in 2017. Prior to

joining the Family Court, Judge Copeland was a solo appellate practitioner and a Per Diem First Circuit District Court Judge. She also founded and served as a prior Chair of the Hawaii State Bar Association's Appellate Section, was a member of the HSBA's Committee on Diversity Equality and the Law, and served several terms as a HSBA Board Member. Her previous community activities included serving on the boards of the Hawaii LGBT Legacy Foundation and Equality Hawaii. As a board member for Equality Hawaii, she successfully advocated for the passage of the Transgender Birth Certificate Bill and the Transgender Insurance Bill. She is the proud mother of two LGBTQ+ children. She was recently appointed as a First Circuit Court Judge by Governor Josh Green.

HONORABLE BRIAN COSTA

Brian A. Costa is a District Family Court Judge in the Family Court of the First Circuit, State of Hawai'i. He received his undergraduate degree from Hawai'i Pacific University in 1998, and his Juris Doctor degree from the William S. Richardson Law School in 2001. He was appointed to the bench in February 2015 as a per diem (part-time) judge in the family district court by Chief Justice Recktenwald, and was later appointed as a full-time judge in June 2017. He has previously served as the lead judge of the Domestic Division, and he is currently the lead judge of the Juvenile Division. Judge Costa has also been the presiding judge for Juvenile Drug Court since December 2017. Prior to being appointed as a judge he was employed at Goodsill Anderson Quinn & Stifel as an associate attorney, he was a deputy prosecuting attorney for the city & county of Honolulu, a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Simeon Acoba, Jr., and a lawyer in private practice at his own firm, Costa & DeLacy, LLLC.

NICOLE CUMMINGS

Nicole K. Cummings was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. She completed her Juris Doctor degree in 1999 at Loyola University Chicago in Illinois. Nicole began her legal work as an AmeriCorps Attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii. She then worked as a Deputy Attorney General, representing the State's Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services in Child Welfare hearings and trials. After a brief departure to tort law in the private sector, Nicole returned to work with families at EPIC Ohana Conferencing as a managing attorney and facilitator. Nicole began her private practice in 2006 and has been a Parents' attorney and GAL in CWS cases and she was one of the initial members of the Hawaii Zero to Three Court. Currently, Nicole continues as a GAL in CWS and adult guardianship cases; she also focuses on child related issues in private custody matters as a Best Interest Fact Finder, Guardian ad Litem, Parenting Coordinator, and Volunteer Settlement Master in mediations. and participant with various court committees. In addition, Nicole is a member of the Child Law Section, the Association of Family and Conciliation Court, the American Bar Association, and serves on various committees within family law.

EMILY HILLS

Emily M. Hills is a Senior Attorney in the Family Law Unit at the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i. She works as a Guardian Ad Litem, representing the best interests of children involved in child welfare cases, and manages a caseload of other family court cases. In the spring, Emily co-teaches the Family Law Clinic at the University of Hawai'i Richardson School of Law. Emily started her career as a public defender in Colorado, before moving to Hawai'i to clerk for Judge Mark J. Bennett on the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald on the Hawai'i Supreme Court. She is a graduate New York University School of Law in 2013.

JOCELYN "JOSIE" HOWARD

Josie Howard is We Are Oceania's, Chief Executive Officer. Josie graduated from Xavier High School in Micronesia and attended the Community College of Micronesia. She later transferred to the University

of Hawai'i at Hilo studying Biology, Anthropology, and Pacific Island Studies in 1989 making her one of the first Micronesians migrating under the Compact of Free Association Treaty. At the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, Josie Howard's roles included student peer counselor, president of the International Students Association, a student researcher at the Minority Biomedical Research Program, a resident assistant at the student housing, president of the Chuukese Students Association, as well as chairperson for the Campus Ministry. Josie has over 15 years of servicing the community, with eight years working with private agencies contracted by the Department of Health Waiver program, five years in the Department of Education, and 5 years in program development, implementation, and piloting a one-stop center model. Josie's community involvement includes being the founder of the Young Voyagers, a youth club in Media with 'Ōlelo, and the Micronesian Cultural Awareness Project. Josie earned her Master's degree in Social Work and is now working as Chief Executive Officer for WAO. Josie is most recognized for her contribution to the "Micronesian Voices in Hawai'i Conference" where she participated as one of six steering committee members who worked with Micronesian Government leaders, community leaders, as well as conference sponsors. She is also known for her work at Goodwill Industries of Hawai'i Inc.'s "Imi Loa Program" where she worked with families and their adult children providing direct services as well as managing the programmatic and fiscal operation. Mrs. Howard is a native of Onoun Island in Micronesia and she speaks Chuukese, Onounese, and English fluently.

YVONNE HUMBLE

Dr. Yvonne Humble has a Bachelor of Science degree, a Master's degree in Special Education, a Specialist Degree in Behavior Disorders, and a Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership, with an emphasis in Special Education. She has over 40 years in the educational system as a teacher, special education teacher, Behavioral Specialist, Director of Special Education, District Education Specialist and is currently the Director of Student Support Services for the Hawai'i Department of Education.

KURT HUMPHREY

Dr. Kurt Humphrey is Medical Director of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division, State of Hawai'i Department of Health. Kurt is originally from Colorado and received his M.D. from the University of Colorado – Denver. He stayed in Colorado for his residency and fellowship training in adult and child and adolescent psychiatry. After moving to Hawai'i in 2014, Kurt joined the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Division's Family Court Liaison Branch before transitioning into the Medical Director role. Kurt's clinical interests include trauma and related disorders, telepsychiatry and mental health issues in the LGBTQ+ population.

EMMA KURASHIGE

Emma Kurashige is a native of the Marshall Islands. She moved to Oahu in 2001 after graduating from Assumption High School in Majuro, Marshall Islands. She has lived in Honolulu for over 20 years. Emma is currently a Statewide 'Ohana Conference Manager at EPIC 'Ohana Inc. She is a graduate of Hawai'i Pacific University where she received both Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Social Work. Emma has worked with the aging, elderly and homeless population, but her focus has been supporting young people and families. While pursuing her graduate degree, she worked at Big Brothers Big Sisters as an Enrollment and Match Specialist. After graduating with her MSW, Emma worked with the YMCA as a Substance Abuse Counselor for students attending Kaimuki and Roosevelt High Schools. Emma joined EPIC 'Ohana Inc in 2009. Since then, she has held multiple roles. Emma was promoted to 'Ohana Conference Manager in 2019. She also provides Marshallese cultural training around the state to help build connections and understanding. She is a proud founding member of We Are Oceania, a non-profit one-stop-shop that services the Marshallese and Micronesian Communities in Hawai'i.

REBECCA S. LESTER

Rebecca S. Lester has maintained a solo legal practice for eight years and currently resides on the Big Island of Hawaii. Her practice is largely focused on the representation of parties in HRS Chapter 587A cases including acting as parent counsel and Guardian Ad Litem. Ms. Lester has represented indigent, criminal clients in both state and federal court. Before opening up her legal practice, Ms. Lester was a deputy prosecuting attorney for the City and County of Honolulu, an associate attorney at the law firm of Kessner, Umebayashi Bain and Matsunaga in Honolulu, HI and an assistant public defender in Philadelphia, PA.

MELISSA MAYO

Melissa Mayo spent five years navigating the foster care system as a youth in care, and has emerged as a formidable advocate for change and empowerment in the Child Welfare System. As the President of the HI H.O.P.E.S. Youth Leadership Board in East Hawaii and a National Jim Casey Fellow, she has displayed unwavering dedication to positive transformation and youth empowerment that extends beyond her leadership roles. In her capacity as the Pono Process lead at EPIC 'Ohana Inc., she promotes youth self-advocacy and ensures that the rights of children and youth in foster care are upheld and honored. Furthermore, Melissa serves as a Lived Experience Advocate at the Children's Law Project of Hawai'i, providing peer support for young people in foster care. Alongside her professional endeavors, she is diligently pursuing her bachelor's degree in Political Science at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo. Melissa also has experience as a resource caregiver and adoptive parent.

ELLADINE OLEVAO

Elladine Olevao is Child Welfare Services Branch Administrator for the Department of Human Services. She began her work as a social worker on Moloka'i. Prior to becoming the Child Welfare Services Branch Administrator in 2018, she was Section Administrator for the County of Maui. She received her bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Hawai'i.

DEREK D. PETERSON

Derek D. Peterson is a deputy attorney general (DAG) in the Family Law Division of the Department of the Attorney General where he handles primarily child welfare cases. Prior to his work as a DAG, Derek was a deputy prosecuting attorney with the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney for the City & County of Honolulu, a staff attorney and guardian ad litem with the Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, and a staff attorney with the Northwest Justice Project (NJP), Washington State's statewide civil legal aid organization. Derek earned his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Washington and is licensed to practice law in Washington State and Hawai'i.

LISA RAPOZO

Lisa Rapozo started her career at Child Welfare Services as a Case Support Aide and worked her way up to her current position as Kauai Section Administrator. She has worked for CWS for 18 years and six years with DHS BESSD First to Work Program. She has a Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from University of Hawaii at Hilo.

BARBARA HIGA ROGERS

Barbara Higa Rogers, PsyD., LCSW, MPH is a forensic psychologist who has completed over 2,000 comprehensive psychological evaluations of children and adults for the Department of Human Services, the Hawaii State Judiciary, U.S. Probation, and private entities. She also conducts risk of dangerousness, competency, and penal responsibility examinations for the Hawaii State Judiciary. She is a member of

the Threat Team Hawaii Consult Group & Steering Committee, as well as a member of Threat Team Education. In child welfare cases, she conducts evaluations of parents for purposes of determining whether they are incapacitated, and she is a mediator in child welfare cases for the Hilo Family Court.

HONORABLE NATASHA SHAW

The Honorable Judge Natasha Shaw began her judicial career on January 14, 2019 when she was appointed by Chief Justice Mark E. Recktenwald as a Per Diem District Family Court Judge in the First Circuit where she presided over domestic violence cases and other cases including, but not limited to, parentage, adoption, guardianships, involuntary hospitalization and assisted community treatment. Two and a half years later, on June 9, 2022, Chief Justice Recktenwald appointed her as a District Family Court Judge in the First Circuit, where she presides over Child Welfare and Juvenile matters in the Juvenile Division, and since January 2024, Senior Judge of the Family Court Matthew J. Viola designated her as the Presiding Judge of the Imua Kakou Specialty Court for the First Circuit. Prior to her judicial career, she practiced law in the areas of probate and trust litigation, contested conservatorships and guardianships, served as Kokua Kanawai and Special Master for the Probate Court and Circuit Court of the First Circuit, and was a law clerk for Chief Judge and Probate Court Judge Colleen Hirai (Ret.) of the First Circuit. Prior to her legal career, she was an internal auditor for a mainland corporation, and her background is in business management and accounting. Judge Shaw is a former President of the Korean American Bar Association of Hawaii and since 2018, serves on the Civil Justice Committee for the American Judicature Society. Judge Shaw is a JD/MBA graduate of Stetson University College of Law and College of Business.

TRISTA SPEER

Trista Speer is a Deputy Director at the Hawaii Department of Human Services. She has more than a decade of experience in a variety of critical public service and legal roles and combines this expertise to make a difference for people and communities, leveraging innovative strategies and driving meaningful change. Prior her current role, Trista served as a Deputy Attorney General for the Department of the Attorney General, where she advised multiple state agencies on various legal and policy matters and represented the state in both state and federal litigation cases. Before serving at the department to the Attorney General, Trista gained extensive experience in complex civil litigation in the private sector and spent nearly a decade serving as a prosecutor specializing in a trauma-informed approach in handling child welfare matters, as well as major crimes, including human trafficking and sexual assault cases. She also serves as a lecturer at the University of Hawaii William S. Richardson School of Law.

DELIA ULIMA

Delia Ulima is Executive Director of EPIC 'OHANA, Inc. She was formerly the HI H.O.P.E.S. Initiative Manager at EPIC 'Ohana. HI H.O.P.E.S. brings together youth voice and community partners to improve policy, practice, relationships and outcomes for young people impacted by foster care in Hawai'i. Delia graduated from Kamehameha Schools, holds a BA in Political Science, a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution, an M.A. in Pacific Islands Studies, and a Juris Doctorate. She is an adjunct faculty member with the Spark Matsunaga Institute for Peace at UH-Mānoa, where she teaches a Children's Rights and the Law course. Delia serves as the vice-chair of the Juvenile Justice State Advisory Council, sits on the Kalihi-Pālama Neighborhood Board and serves on the Native Advisory Council (Hawai'i Region) to the Congressional Commission on Native Children. Delia was born and raised in Kaluaopalea, Kalihi and lives there with her 'ohana.