

October 2026

To: Hawai'i Boards and Commissions
Governor Green

re: **Application for Appointment to the State of Hawai'i Board of Education**
Why I, Vanessa Ott, Am an Excellent Candidate for BOE Member

Aloha Governor Green,

Hawai'i could have a world-class education and library system if its leaders would sincerely engage all six types of stakeholders: students, parents, administrators, teachers, support staff, *and* community members locally and statewide. We need a State Board of Education that brings diverse perspectives to the table — one that is committed to improving itself as well as the agencies it oversees. This requires BOE members with a vision for fostering authentic community engagement, effective communication, accountability, superlative internal support, and procedures for hearing and learning from boots-on-the-ground stakeholders.

My skills, experience, education, and temperament make me an ideal candidate for appointment to the BOE. My body does not. I'm sixty-seven years old with a spinal deformity. This handicap causes constant, chronic pain, and affects my ability to do minor physical tasks like lifting, bending, standing up, walking quickly, and sitting for too long. I'm able to drive an hour and a half to get to the Kailua-Kona airport, fly to and from Oahu, and return home, but it takes a toll physically and mentally. Still, in spite of my physical limitations, I've have spent countless hours toiling for public education improvements in Hawai'i.

My resumé/curriculum vitae outlines my twenty-year history of fulfilling various public education stakeholder roles in Hawai'i. What's not in the resumé is that after becoming permanently partially disabled in 2002, I decided to change my career path because I wanted to live in on the Big Island, a special place on Earth alive with volcanos, snow, sweltering sun, tropical forests, deserts, and aloha. Thus, I embarked on a journey to become a public-school teacher in Hawai'i. First, I enrolled in the California State University Teacher Credential program. Then, there was a year of full-time classes and an internship starting just one month after my second spinal surgery in 2004. As a student new to being handicapped, I developed a deep understanding of how schools can provide equitable opportunities for those with disabilities, and the barriers to success handicapped individuals face in academic institutions.

Performing different roles connected to the Hawai'i DOE and BOE over the past two decades, I've experienced different types of difficulties we must overcome for Hawai'i to have a better, and dare I say, *great* public education system. All the problems I've encountered stem from community *disengagement*. There is a lack of openness, transparency, responsiveness, stakeholder interaction, and adequate conflict resolution skills from top to bottom. Stakeholders who have a voice, i.e., some power to contribute to positive improvements, will step up and make changes. As it stands now, though, our people are disenfranchised and apathetic about Hawai'i's mediocre and poorly performing schools. A disenchanted and disconnected landscape lies before us. Teacher turnover is tellingly far too common. The high rate of private school enrollment in Hawai'i is another symptom of the fractured foundation I'd like to have the opportunity to shore up by improving stakeholder engagement and collaboration in our schools and Board of Education.

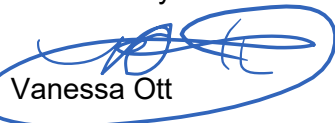
An extremely important asset for the BOE that I possess is formal training in and practical application of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (RONR). RONR is the national "bible" for how people can work together efficiently and effectively to get business done. Over the years, I've witnessed too many BOE members with little knowledge of RONR waste a lot of time getting board business accomplished. This would not be an issue where I'm concern. Although not an expert, I'm a RONR devotee. Recently, I purchased two copies of the latest edition of RONR — one each for the Na'alehu and Pahala Libraries which had none before.

Another characteristic which sets me apart from the majority of my age-level peers is a long history of proficiency with computer, internet, telecommunications, audio, and video technologies. Years before the COVID quarantine when almost *everyone* began using technology to communicate, I was connecting the public to the BOE by recording board meetings and posting them on YouTube. See this November 7, 2016 *Hawai'i News Now* story about my video channel community engagement crusade:

hawaiinewsnow.com/story/33653363/former-teachers-mission-make-boe-discussions-more-accessible

I prefer that you appoint a younger, more able-bodied, knowledgeable, and experienced candidate who, like me, has the time to be an effective BOE member and a passion for improving community engagement. I don't think finding such a candidate will be easy. In the event I am the best candidate for the Hawai'i County representative on the BOE, I'm willing to commit to selfless public service pursuing a brighter academic and intellectual future for Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Vanessa Ott