

Three Hawaii County finalists considered for UH Board of Regents

By Tribune-Herald staff

Gov. Josh Green is considering three candidates for appointment to the University of Hawaii Board of Regents to fill one of two seats representing Hawaii Island.

The candidates were selected by the board's Candidate Advisory Council, according to a UH press release. Whichever one is chosen by the governor will be subject to confirmation by the state Senate.

"The Candidate Advisory Council members extend their sincere appreciation to all the individuals who took the time to apply to serve as a University of Hawaii Regent," CAC Chair Brigitte Yoshino said in the press release. "While the selection was difficult due to the quality of the candidates, we are pleased to submit these names for consideration to the governor and the state Senate."

The three finalists are:

— Chad Cabral: Born and raised on Hawaii Island, Cabral is a graduate of both Hawaii Community College and UH Hilo. He also holds a master's in higher education administration and has over 20 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector throughout Hawaii County in various capacities. He is currently the chief executive officer for the Boys and Girls Club of the Big Island.

— Makai Freitas: Currently serving as a Hawaiian Homes commissioner for West Hawaii, Freitas has a background in labor with 20 years of experience in union organizing and representation. He has worked on docks around the state as a longshoreman and has been elected to leadership positions within the Longshore and Warehouse Union.

— Wendy Laros: As the president and CEO of the Kona-Kohala Chamber of Commerce, Laros oversees the representation of 460 businesses. She is a graduate of both UH Hilo and Manoa and currently serves on the Hawaii County Community College Advisory Council as well as the University of Hawaii at Hilo Community Advisory Board.

The confirmed candidate will join the 11 member board, which is made up of five volunteer representatives from the City and County of Honolulu, two each from Hawaii and Maui County, one from Kauai County and a student board member.

Their appointment will begin July 1, 2026, for a five-year term.