

## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF HAWAI'I

### **Press release - For immediate release**

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### **FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY OF HAWAI'I HONORS REP. JUSTIN WOODSON AND LT. GOV. SYLVIA LUKE AS LEGISLATORS OF THE YEAR FOR 2021 AND 2022**

HONOLULU – The Friends of the Library of Hawai'i (FLH) presented Legislator of the Year awards for 2021 and 2022 at its Legislative Recognition Event on February 22. The Mahalo Award is presented annually to a State legislator who has demonstrated exemplary support of Hawai'i's public libraries during the prior legislative session.

FLH President Kathy Fay presented the **2021 Mahalo Award to Rep. Justin Woodson** (House District 9, Kahului, Pu'unēnē, and a portion of Wailuku) who has served on the House Education committee since 2017 and has had oversight over public libraries in his role. Due to the pandemic conditions in early 2021, the Friends of the Library of Hawai'i postponed this award to this year.

In accepting the award, Rep. Woodson shared some of his memories of the public library during his childhood. He spoke of the library experience coming full circle as he now enjoys frequenting the Kahului Library with his children. Rep. Woodson chose the book, "The Audacity of Hope," by Barack Obama to be donated to the Hawai'i State Library and his home Kahului Public Library branch in his honor.

During the pandemic, Rep. Woodson brought crucial support to retain staffing at the public libraries and helped the system weather the budgetary constraints the pandemic posed. Rep. Woodson has also vigorously supported various State Library capital improvement projects across the state, and through proposed legislation hopes to incorporate fairer publisher pricing practices into law. The capital improvement projects have helped to improve library services for his community and many around the state. The push for fairer publisher pricing will greatly assist our public libraries to offer more titles and copies to help meet the needs of patrons.

Fay also presented the **2022 Mahalo Award to Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke** (awarded for her time as a State Representative, House District 25 – Maikiki, Punchbowl, Nu'uanu, Dowsett Highlands, Pacific Heights, and Pauoa). Throughout her tenure in the State House of Representatives, then Rep. Luke supported library budgets to maintain library services and staff through her position as House Finance Committee Chair.

She also showed an interest in new and innovative ideas to expand public library services. Rep. Luke worked with the library system administration to explore new services that would enhance the public library spaces as more than just repositories of books. Early childhood education is an area of opportunity that then Rep. and now Lt. Gov. Luke looks forward to developing.

Lt. Gov. Luke spoke about her love for libraries and reflected on the many ways they have helped her. Born in South Korea, she attended Queen Ka'ahumanu Elementary School as a 5th-grader not knowing any English. Her visits to the library were an opportunity to learn new English words while looking through colorful children's books. In middle school and high school, libraries became a place of exploration and research — fueling her passion for science.

As a young mother, she would take her son, Logan, to keiki story time read-aloud, and one of their favorite books was "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein. Lt. Gov. Luke selected this book to donate to the Hawai'i State Public Library System and the Liliha Public Library branch.

During her time as House Finance Committee Chair, she also supported many major Capital Improvement Projects to improve libraries across the state and worked with the Legislature to appropriate \$33.6 million to modernize the libraries' facilities and meet the evolving needs of Hawai'i's communities. She said she is proud to continue supporting the Friends of the Library of Hawai'i and the vitality of public libraries in her new role as the lieutenant governor.

"Rep. Woodson and Lt. Gov. Luke have been remarkable supporters of public libraries in Hawai'i," said FLH President Kathy Fay. "We recognize and thank them for their outstanding service."

The Friends of the Library of Hawai'i was founded in 1879 as a nonprofit organization to support and promote Hawai'i's public libraries, encouraging literacy and providing educational programming outside of the normal State budget. FLH provides this important funding through fundraisers such the Village Books & Music bookstore at Ward Centre, the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Booksale scheduled for Summer 2023 at Ward Village, and the 29<sup>th</sup> annual Links to Literacy golf tournament scheduled for Fall 2023.

For more information call 808-536-4174 or visit the FLH website at [www.flhhawaii.org](http://www.flhhawaii.org).

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Photo Attached: (from left) Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke, State Librarian Stacey Aldrich, Rep. Justin Woodson (Courtesy Office of Lt. Gov. Sylvia Luke)