

**SB16**



STATE OF HAWAII  
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM  
OFFICE OF THE STATE LIBRARIAN  
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813

## **Senate Committee on Education and Housing Monday, February 2, 2009**

### **SB 16 - RELATING TO CRIMINAL HISTORY RECORD CHECKS**

The Hawaii State Public Library System (HSPLS) does not support SB 16, which would require background checks on volunteers working in public libraries.

In Fiscal Year 2008, the HSPLS had 1,713 volunteers who contributed 59,853 hours of service in 41 of our 51 branches. Of the 1,713 volunteers, 57% were adults and 43% were youth. These volunteers performed a wide range of duties including sorting donated materials, cleaning books and book jackets, straightening shelves, light gardening or flower arranging, assisting with book or bake sales, clerical assistance, and providing program support for events such as the summer reading programs.

The staff of the HSPLS wholeheartedly agrees that the safety of the thousands of children who visit our libraries daily is of paramount concern. Consequently, our volunteers are given training by staff and are monitored while performing their duties. Most volunteers are given assignments in staff areas or with staff nearby. Due to liability concerns, volunteers are usually not given assignments where they are working directly with children without library staff supervision.

While the HSPLS agrees with the intent of Senate Bill 16, the cost of processing criminal background checks for these nearly 2,000 volunteers would be prohibitively expensive and not feasible under current department funding. The State Department of the Attorney General lists the costs for a request for an extensive criminal history record check to be up to \$90.00. This would amount to about \$180,000.00. In addition, processing criminal background checks for nearly 2,000 volunteers would almost surely require the creation of a full-time volunteer coordinator position, a position which existed before 1995, but was eliminated when budget reductions forced HSPLS to eliminate more than 110 positions.

Especially as we face further budget restrictions, furloughs and layoffs, the loss of almost 60,000 hours of unpaid volunteer assistance would make providing quality, professional services in Hawaii's public libraries even more difficult.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this matter.