

Monday, February 16, 2015

This Testimony in Support of SB 760 is being submitted by Jim Kennedy, as the Executive Director of Hawaii Fi-Do Service Dogs, a Honolulu based non-profit organization that trains and provides service dogs for people with disabilities other than blindness.

Hawaii Fi-Do strongly supports the passage of this bill for the following reasons:

1. There is an alarming increase in the use of "fake" service dogs. This problem is exacerbated by the easy online availability of so-called "service dog certifications" with little or no proof being required. The easy online availability of service dog vests and harnesses is also contributing to this problem.
2. The "fake" service dogs are causing problems for people with legitimate service dogs, because business establishments are understandably growing increasingly confused as they try to figure out what really constitutes a service animal.
3. While ADA does allow individuals to train their own service dogs, it does not consider pets or pet therapy dogs as service dogs.
4. Abusers with fake service dogs often are just looking for ways to get their pets accepted in establishments.
5. SB760 would make it illegal for people to falsely portray their dogs as service dogs. Fines and possible jail time should deter at least some from abuse. While enforcement issues understandably may be a concern, we strongly believe that as the good people of Hawaii become better aware of the new law and how serious the fake service dog problem is, more may be willing to notify authorities if they know someone is using a fake service dog. Getting even a few fake service dogs off the streets in the beginning IS a good beginning!
6. Passage of SB 760 should create an excellent opportunity to educate the people of Hawaii about just how bad this problem really is.

Hawaii Fi-Do Service Dogs wants the State of Hawaii to know it would be most willing and interested in collaborating with development of an education awareness program to make the fake service dog problem be better understood in Hawaii.

Mahalo nui loa!

Jim Kennedy

Executive Director

Hawaii Fi-Do Service Dogs