



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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Friday, February 4, 2021
3:00 pm
State Capitol, Room 229 + videoconference

By Stacey A. Aldrich
State Librarian

**S.B. 2214 RELATING TO DIGITAL LITERACY; LIBRARIES; BOARD OF EDUCATION;
STATE LIBRARIAN**

To: Chair Michelle N. Kidani
Vice Chair Donna Mercado Kim
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

The Hawaii State Public Library System (HSPLS) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on SB2214, requiring the Board of Education through the State Librarian to establish digital literacy programs for public libraries.

HSPLS strongly supports this bill as it formally recognizes the role that public libraries play in supporting digital literacy for our communities. The current language specifically focuses on developing programs for children, families and workforce. We respectfully request that the language be broadened to address the digital literacy needs of all community members.

The public library is the place to provide digital tools and resources everyone needs to be successful in the digital world - from keiki who need skills for education, to kupuna who need to access information, government resources and manage general day-to-day life activities such as shopping, medical appointments, etc.

While our public libraries have been supporting digital literacy skills since the early days of public internet access, we have participated in a few pilot projects over the last 10 months that have helped us understand our communities' digital needs better. In working with the Workforce Development Council of the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations and AARP, we have found that people are at different stages of digital literacy and there is no one-size fits all programming. Our goal is to provide an array of digital skill building opportunities from one-on-one coaching to physical/virtual classes that will support basic to advanced digital literacy skills, so that our communities can grow and successfully participate in the 21st Century.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this Bill and your continued support of the Hawaii State Public Library System.



Chamber of Commerce HAWAII

The Voice of Business

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education
Friday, February 4, 2022, at 3:00 P.M.
Conference Room 229 & Videoconference**

RE: SB 2214 Relating to Digital Literacy

Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee:

The Chamber of Commerce Hawaii ("The Chamber") **supports** SB 2214 which Establishes a digital literacy program to be overseen by the Board of Education and implemented by the State Librarian to promote digital literacy through programmatic activities that expose children and parents to digital tools.

The Chamber is Hawaii's leading statewide business advocacy organization, representing about 2,000+ businesses. Approximately 80% of our members are small businesses with less than 20 employees. As the "Voice of Business" in Hawaii, the organization works on behalf of members and the entire business community to improve the state's economic climate and to foster positive action on issues of common concern.

Through strategic and deliberate collaboration, the Chamber is supporting K-12 career and technical education and the University of Hawaii System, and synergy with business community, resulting in new industry partner connections, sector-driven workforce development solutions, increased certification attainment and high-quality work-based learning (WBL) experiences.

Establishing a digital literacy program in Hawaii would ensure that students learn the necessary skills that would prepare them for the 21st century economy and for employment after graduation. While digitization offers advantages to employees with extensive digital literacy, it also increases barriers for members of the workforce who lack digital skills. Increasing digital literacy among students and members of the workforce would increase their competitiveness in an economy increasingly defined by the ability to use digital tools.

With the rise in workforce shortages across multiple industries, this bill will help students graduate and participate in the modern-day workplace, while also strengthening and diversifying our economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii
Testimony before the Committee on Education (EDU)
Hawaii State Senate
Thirty-First Legislature, Regular Session of 2022
February 4, 2022, 3:00 PM, hearing on sb2214

Good afternoon, Madam chair, Madam vice chair, and committee members. I am James Gashel, representing the National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii, fully supporting sb2214 and suggesting a simple amendment.

The purpose of this bill is to increase access to digital tools and promote digital literacy by establishing a digital literacy program to be administered by the board of education through the state librarian. The bill directs the board of education, through the state librarian, to provide for the establishment and ongoing operation of digital literacy programs for the public libraries in the State; and to provide coordination and facilitation of the activities of digital literacy service providers and digital literacy programs in the public, private, and volunteer sectors. We applaud the objectives of this bill.

Members of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Hawaii are blind. By definition we cannot see or read the information on computer screens. We cannot see information posted on websites. That said, digital literacy for blind people is among our highest priority needs and goals. Access to digital technology and skills can be an important key to independence and self-sufficiency for our blind students and for full participation in the workforce.

Instead of looking at computer screens, blind people listen to screen readers. We say the technology is “accessible,” when the content is properly developed to expose text to screen readers. Our screen readers also support output of content to electronic Braille display devices. This technology is wonderful but requires specialized digital literacy skills to use it.

This bill has very broad language to describe the objectives of the digital literacy program. Our concern is that the unique and specialized needs of blind people and others with disabilities can easily and unintentionally be overlooked unless acknowledged in the law creating the program.

Accordingly, NFB of Hawaii suggests adding a clause to subsection (b) after “tools (the second time it appears) to read” as follows: “increasing knowledge and use of tools to make digital technology accessible to individuals with disabilities;”

We understand this amendment we suggest could very well be subsumed within the current general objectives as stated in subsection (b). You would think that any comprehensive digital literacy program would include access technology training as a matter of course. That’s what we would like to think too, but it doesn’t really happen that way. Accessibility for persons with disabilities tends to be an afterthought. Accessibility can happen when we make enough of a fuss to make it happen, but it does take a fuss.

This is our experience as blind people. Please help by anticipating our need for accessibility by writing it into the law.

Our position on SB2214 is to be sure that digital literacy is advanced for all students. We want to be sure that blind students do not end up on the wrong side of the digital divide if the legislature directs the Board of Education to establish a digital literacy program. Mahalo for your consideration of the amendment we suggest to address our accessibility needs.

SB-2214

Submitted on: 2/1/2022 2:44:09 PM

Testimony for EDU on 2/4/2022 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Remote Testimony Requested
Salena Lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support bill SB2214 to establish a digital literacy program to be overseen by the Board of Education and implemented by the State Librarian to promote digital literacy through programmatic activities that expose children and parents to digital tools.

Thank you,

Salena Lee