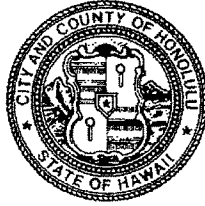


HONOLULU EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

3375 KOAPAKA STREET, SUITE H-450 • HONOLULU, HAWAII 96819-1869
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LATE
04/09/08 1:50pm

MUFI HANNEMANN
MAYOR



ELIZABETH A. CHAR. M.D.
DIRECTOR

April 9, 2008

The Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair,
and Members
Committee on Tourism and Government Operations
The Senate
The Twenty-Fourth Legislature
Regular Session of 2008
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu Hawaii 96813

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 166

Dear Chair Nishihara and Members:

The City and County of Honolulu strongly supports the intent of SCR 166 and offers the following testimony:

As noted in the text of the Resolution, drowning rates in the State of Hawaii are among the highest in the nation, and half of these drowning episodes involve visitors to our island state.

The prevention of ocean drownings has always been a priority for the City and County of Honolulu's Emergency Services Department's Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division, and division staff has worked closely with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, the State Department of Health, and the neighbor island counties to develop and implement sound drowning prevention initiatives. Of course, we believe that the provision of properly trained and properly equipped lifeguards at popular beach areas is the front line of defense in any drowning prevention campaign. The City & County of Honolulu has provided ocean lifeguard services for the island of Oahu through the Ocean Safety and Lifeguard Services Division, and the division has been recognized for its professional lifeguards, its leadership, and prevention initiatives at the national and international levels.

These initiatives have included the printing and distribution water safety brochures for each island, showing water safety videos on incoming Hawaiian Airlines flights, working with various visitor industry groups, and most recently, the development of a beach hazard website that contains daily, updated, accurate information about beach hazards and conditions: (www.hawaiibeachsafety.org).

The Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair,
and Members
April 9, 2008
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It is extremely difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of an individual prevention strategy; and to determine which medium is the most effective in disseminating accurate and timely information regarding ocean conditions is not a simple task. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has an office of Unintentional Injury Prevention that includes drowning prevention in its purview, and offers some guidance in the evaluation of the effectiveness of certain prevention strategies. However, no one has ever been able to say with any degree of certainty that printed handouts are more or less effective than video messages or information gleaned from the world wide web.

Before this committee passes out this measure, we would respectfully suggest that the Hawaii Tourism Authority and the State Department of Health's Injury Prevention and Control Program be tasked with determining which medium (print, video, internet, etc.) is the most effective method of disseminating ocean safety information. This information, along with input from county ocean safety/lifeguard services, can best determine where limited resources should be directed in the effort to reduce ocean drownings in the State of Hawaii.

The City & County of Honolulu strongly supports the intent of SCR 166, and will be an active participant in the development and implementation of whatever strategies are determined to be the most effective.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter.



Elizabeth A. Char, M.D.
Director

**THE HAWAIIAN LIFEGUARD ASSOCIATION
PMB 271, 758 KAPAHULU AVE, SUITE A
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96816**

April 9, 2008

LATE
04/09/08 1:50pm

The Honorable Clarence Nishihara, Chair, and Members
Committee on Tourism and Government Operations
The Senate
The Twenty-Fourth Legislature
Regular Session of 2008
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu Hawaii 96813

Re: Senate Concurrent Resolution 166, Senate Resolution 91

Dear Chair Nishihara and Members:

The Hawaiian Lifeguard Association (HLA) is the statewide non-profit organization that supports the efforts of the 400 professional ocean lifeguards employed by the four counties in Hawaii. The HLA's primary activities include fundraising for Junior Lifeguard Programs and other educational, prevention-oriented projects.

The Association in is strong support of SCR 166 and SR 91, which request the HTA, the State Department of Health, and the water safety organizations in the state to furnish onboard a visitor water safety information multi-lingual handout to provide education on water recreational hazards.

According to the State Department of Health as well as the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Hawaii has one of the highest drowning rates for residents and visitors in the country. The HLA believes that there are many reasons for this alarming statistic, including the uniqueness of the Hawaiian ocean environment, the poor aquatics skill levels of our visitors and residents, and the increase in the number and type of activities occurring in the ocean surrounding the state.

SCR 166, SR 91

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It is commonly accepted that educational efforts are the key to injury prevention. In the case of drowning prevention, informing visitors about the hazards of the Pacific Ocean is not only a good idea, it is an essential, mandatory task of those in the visitor industry who use the beauty and mystique of Hawaii's beaches to attract people to come to Hawaii.

The Hawaiian Lifeguard Association has recently worked with the Hawaii Tourism Authority, the State Department of Health, and the University of Hawaii to develop a beach hazard website:

www.hawaiibeachsafety.org, that gives up to date, accurate hazard information for Hawaii's most popular beaches. This site is the result of collaboration among many organizations and agencies concerned with the safety of our visitors and residents. We would suggest that any print material developed as a result of these resolutions direct people to the website.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

Sincerely,



Jan Prins, Ph.D.
President