

SB2096

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn Matayoshi, Interim Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB 2096 Relating to Education

Purpose of Bill: Establishes a voluntary career mentoring program in the department of education to provide high school students with contact information for retirees who volunteer to share experience and knowledge about potential careers.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (DOE) does not support SB2096. While volunteer career mentors are needed by schools and the department recognizes the significant contribution that retirees are making in our schools, this proposed bill is unnecessary. Volunteers and the rights, responsibilities, and expectations in volunteer relationships, as defined in Chapter 90, apply to volunteers in the schools and thus already allows for and facilitates volunteering by retirees.

The Department would also prefer to allow for the possibility that retirees may wish to volunteer for other kinds of opportunities besides career mentoring as well as for the fact that a volunteer wishing to be a career mentor may not be a retiree. To limit potential volunteers to a specific opportunity or to subject different groups wishing to perform the same volunteer role to different requirements would be unnecessarily restrictive and even discriminatory.

The Department has also already initiated use of an online volunteer

database at helphawaiischools.com. The online tool currently enables participating schools to post volunteer and donor opportunities, to maintain their own database of volunteers and donors, and to appropriately match volunteers or donors to school needs. In so far as funds are available, the DOE is attempting to make a one year no-cost trial use of the website tool available to all schools by doing so incrementally each year. Following the one year trial use, schools have the option thereafter to continue use at their own expense. Contact information, professional area or areas of expertise, availability, school preference, and more are being collected to match volunteers with opportunities and students who may need a career mentor. Therefore, retirees who wish to serve as career mentors in our schools can currently use the website, albeit with a limited number of schools at this time.

Amending Section 846-2.7 to require criminal history record checks for only those volunteers participating in the volunteer career mentoring program in the DOE would not only address a limited number of volunteers but also require budget and staffing that the Department currently lacks.

For these reasons, the Department does not support SB2096.