



Committee: Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Hearing Date/Time: Wednesday, April 4, 2018, 4 p.m.
Place: Conference Room 211
Re: Testimony of the ACLU of Hawai'i in opposition to S.C.R. 65,
Requesting Federal Funding to Provide Resource Officers in Hawai'i Schools

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Chair Keith-Agaran, and Committee Members:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i ("**ACLU of Hawai'i**") writes ***in opposition to*** S.C.R. 65, which, in light of recent school shootings, including the recent shooting in Parkland, Florida, requests the Honolulu Police Department to report the costs of funding on-campus school resource officers in intermediate schools and high schools on the island of Oahu.

The ACLU of Hawai'i supports taking a hard look at the systems designed to protect our children in Hawai'i and there are a number of effective measures that do not raise any civil rights concerns, including investing in community mental health services, adding more school counselors, and expanding programs to help our youth develop the skills to navigate crises.

Students, however, should not have to bear the burden of additional measures. Already, kids in Hawai'i—especially Native Hawaiians, Filipino, Marshallese, Palauan, Micronesian, and students with disabilities—are being referred to law enforcement for misbehavior once handled by school administrators. Adding more school resource officers without defining their role will inevitably increase such referrals, which in Hawai'i already appear to be high according to U.S. Department of Education data. **Indeed, in Kauai, where they already have school resource officers in high schools, minors are around ten times more likely to be arrested than in the rest of Hawai'i**.¹

School shootings and school violence is a complex problem that requires a thoughtful response. Over policing students—just as arming teachers—is neither effective nor fair to the students. For example, in Florida, eighty percent of districts already have an officer at every high school; many have more than one. And yet, they are too often involved in routine discipline, resulting in increased youth interaction with the criminal justice system.

In summary, hastily reacting to tragedy without examining the current system to keep students safe would be counterproductive. Therefore, we respectfully request that your Committee defer the matter to consider what set of measures would be most effective to keep Hawai'i students safe without compromising their civil rights.

¹ Based on the latest publicly available information from 2012 and using demographic information from the United States Census Bureau. See Office of the Attorney General, *Juvenile Delinquency Trends in Hawaii* at 10 & 98 (May 2014), available at https://ag.hawaii.gov/cpja/files/2013/01/Data-Book-for-2003_2012.pdf.

American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i
P.O. Box 3410
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96801
T: (808) 522-5900
F: (808) 522-5909
E: office@acluhawaii.org
www.acluhawaii.org

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,



Mateo Caballero
Legal Director
ACLU of Hawai'i

The mission of the ACLU of Hawai'i is to protect the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the U.S. and State Constitutions. The ACLU of Hawai'i fulfills this through legislative, litigation, and public education programs statewide. The ACLU of Hawai'i is a non-partisan and private non-profit organization that provides its services at no cost to the public and does not accept government funds. The ACLU of Hawai'i has been serving Hawai'i for 50 years.