

Candace Van Buren

From: Sabrina Clark [sabrina@sabrinaclark.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2008 11:18 PM
To: Rep. Scott Nishimoto
Cc: Rep. Glenn Wakai
Subject: late testimony in support of HB 2406 provided within the 24 hour deadline

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Representative Joseph M. Souki, Chair
Representative Scott Y. Nishimoto, Vice-chair
Transportation Committee
Representative Kyle T. Yamashita, Chair
Representative Glenn Wakai, Vice-chair
Economic Development and Business Concerns Committee
Wednesday, January 30, 2008
Support of HB 2406, Relating to School Buses

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I strongly support HB 2406.

Hello,

My name is Sabrina Clark and I am a concerned citizen in favor of HB 2406. I support seat belts on school buses for the following reasons.

1. It is a sad fact that children die in school bus accidents, at an average of 11 per year. Just because no child has YET to die in a school bus in Hawaii, does not mean that seat belts should not be available on school buses. Most school bus accident fatalities occur in rollover crashes. Seatbelts will help prevent injuries in rollover crashes and side crashes more than mere compartmentalization, the current safety method used for schoolbuses. An accident in Kaimuki involving a dump truck and a school bus caused 12 children riding the bus to be hospitalized. The American Association of Pediatrics estimates about 6,000 to 10,000 children are injured in school buses per year and 3,000 to 5,000 of these children could be spared injury if they were wearing lap/shoulder seat belts. According to the 2007 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, shoulder/lap seat belts would make a child safer on large school buses. (see 49 CFR part 571 at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/staticfiles/DOT/NHTSA/Rulemaking/Rules/Associated%20Files/222UpgradeNPRMSept25.pdf>).
2. Loss of ridership is not an argument with the availability of "second generation" lap/shoulder seat belts as these seats combine compartmentalization with room for 2 large students to adults or 3 gradeschool students per seat, the same number buses currently carry. (see http://safeguardseat.com/bus/products_flex_work.htm). Any argument for inflating the cost of implementing the use of seat belts on school buses because of the need to purchase more buses due to loss of ridership is false and patently outdated. California and Texas have implemented such "second generation" seats on new school buses with no loss of ridership.
3. Implementing seat belts on school buses is not prohibitively expensive. The cost to outfit a large school bus with the "second generation" seating is about \$7000 to \$10,000. It can be much more expensive to retrofit an older bus than a new one, and perhaps the bill can be amended to reduce the cost by calling for only newly acquired buses to have seat belts. Also to offset costs, an additional fee can be added to moving violations. For example, Texas used an additional \$15 fee per moving violation to fund seat belts on school buses.

4. Seat belt laws and huge amounts of government spending have convinced the public that wearing a seat belt saves

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lives. New York, New Jersey, Florida, Texas, Kansas and California have all passed laws requiring seat belts on school buses. Hawaii should follow the lead of these states and help protect children on school buses. How can a parent have their child in a child seat, booster seat, or seat belt at all times and not feel concerned that their child is not in a seat belt on a school bus? It just makes sense to have seat belts available on school buses in Hawaii.

Thank you for your time in allowing me to testify in favor of HB 2406. I support the implementation of seat belts on school buses.

Sincerely,
Sabrina Clark

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