

Senator Brian T. Taniguchi, Chair
Senator Clayton Hee, Vice Chair
Committee on Judiciary and Labor
SB 2366

Monday, February 25, 2008
10:00am, Conference Room 016

My name is Douglas Chafe. I am a Makakilo resident and a daily commuter on H-1. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB2366.

During my commute from Makakilo to Pearl Harbor, I've seen a recent increase in texting while driving. I have several examples, but in the interests of time, I'll only mention two.

- One afternoon, during a normal slow commute around the stadium interchange, I noticed the car next to me slowly coming into my lane. Luckily, I was in the far right lane, and was able to move towards the shoulder. I looked at the driver and saw her reading her cell phone. I honked my horn, and gestured (politely) to her. She responded with a not-so-polite gesture as she returned to her lane. And returned to her text message.
- Last week I was driving home through the new North-South Road construction area on H-1. This is where the lanes narrow and shift to the left and to the right, requiring extra attention. I passed a car in the middle lane traveling at least 10 mph slower than the traffic flow. She was backing up traffic, and causing others to make unsafe lane changes. The driver was texting.

As I said, these are only a couple of several examples I could offer. My teenage son and I used to play a game we called "Dialing or drinking?" The point of the game was to determine whether someone's bad driving was due to being drunk or to talking on a cell phone. The purpose was not to make light of bad driving, but to show my son that a driver who doesn't pay attention can be as dangerous as a drunk driver. We still play the game, but we've started calling it "Talking or texting?"

It does not seem like such a law should be needed. But in my experience, it is. Drivers have become too accustomed to not paying attention. As I've talked to friends, family, and co-workers about this bill, I've gotten three types of responses: (1) Way to go!, I'm with you!, Good luck!; (2) Nice idea, but it will never be enforced; and (3) Oh, I text while driving, but it's okay because I can text without looking at the keys.

Now, this last response demonstrates the need for education and publicity on this issue. An example is my brother, who lives in Virginia. At our family Christmas gathering he admitted to me that he read Blackberry emails while driving. We talked about it, and he agreed that it is a problem, and has stopped doing it. He has become an advocate of banning texting while driving, and has sent me articles from the Washington Post on similar efforts in Virginia. SB2366 can help raise awareness of the problem here in Hawaii.

As for lack of enforcement, that is probably true. This is similar to the lack of carpool lane enforcement on H-1. But, although I see many drivers abusing the carpool lane, I see many more behaving responsibly. Just because some drivers choose to ignore laws

does not mean that the laws don't help. Most drivers obey traffic laws. Mostly. If texting while driving is prohibited, most drivers will comply.

Finally, let me echo the most common response I receive. I very much appreciate the Senate taking up this bill, and add my voice to those who say I'm with you!

Thank you,
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