

**Date:** 02/02/2009

**Committee:** House Education

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB 0176 RELATING TO SCHOOL BUSES.

**Purpose of Bill:** Requires all school buses imported into the state after July 1, 2010, to be equipped with lap and shoulder belt assemblies at all designated seating positions. Requires DOE to adopt rules requiring the use of seatbelts. Requires school buses that are currently in Hawaii to be retrofitted and equipped with lap and shoulder belt assemblies by July 1, 2020.

**Department's Position:** The Department of Education (Department) supports this bill which requires all school buses to be fitted with seat belts for the added safety of our bus riding students, however the Department has several issues that should be considered:

A. Increase in Costs. Increasing costs in equipment purchases for our bus contractors will eventually increase the costs in bus contracts. It is estimated that it would cost an additional \$10,000 - \$15,000 to purchase a new school bus equipped with lap and shoulder belt assemblies at all designated seating positions.

B. Impact on Number of Buses Required. If a 24-bench bus is equipped with 2 seat belt assemblies per bench, the bus is limited to transporting 48 students, whereas the same bus could transport a maximum of 72 elementary school students today (3 per bench). To cover the reduction in seating capacity, it is estimated that an additional 13 Type-I buses would be needed each year at approximately \$1.2 million; or \$12 million over 10 years. Future funding will be required if this bill is adopted.