

Testimony Before  
The Senate of the State of Hawaii

LATE TESTIMONY

Wednesday, February 03, 2010

Submitted by: Lee Gomes

Relating to Transportation of School Children

Good Afternoon Senators:

My name is Lee Gomes and I represent Gomes School Bus Service, Ltd. and the Hawaii School Bus Association. I would like to say that I strongly support the proposed amendment to Section 302A-406 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes as noted in Senate Bill 2452.

Having school buses service school aged children is the safest and most suitable transportation that can be provided to our children. School buses have a long-standing record of being the safest vehicles on our nation's highways. Upgrades to the construction of these buses are mandated regularly by the Federal Government to assure school buses maintain their integrity as the safest vehicles on our nations roadways.

Regulations governing the school bus driver are far and beyond those of any other passenger vehicle driver. School bus drivers are required to have special endorsements to their CDL license that is specifically geared for school bus driving. After acquiring their CDL license the applicant must pass a drug-screening test approved by the Federal Department of Transportation, a fingerprinting process, a criminal abstract clearance, driving history clearance, a physical exam, and TB screening clearance before they are allowed to transport our children. These clearances must be repeated on a regularly scheduled basis for the duration of employment. In addition, the DOT as well as the DOE mandates annual and bi-annual driver-training courses for all school bus drivers.

Hawaii's school bus system, consisting of over 800 buses, is a form of mass transit currently servicing the entire State. Each bus eliminates approximately 35 private vehicles traveling our roadways twice daily, whenever school is in session, easing traffic congestion on our already overburdened roads.

School buses are an integral part of the educational system. These buses afford many children their only way of getting to school on a safe and timely basis. Availability of these buses also give students the opportunity to educational experiences outside the classroom as well as participating in many school sponsored sports events.

Our children deserve access to equal educational opportunities without undue transportation hardships. I urge you to pass Senate Bill 2452 for the safety and welfare of the children of Hawaii.

Thank you,

Lee Gomes  
Gomes School Bus Service, Ltd.  
Hawaii School Bus Association