

ichiyama3 - Cu Ri

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2011 12:13 PM
To: TRNtestimony
Cc: sharpersenses@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Testimony for HCR43 on 3/23/2011 9:00:00 AM

Testimony for TRN 3/23/2011 9:00:00 AM HCR43

Conference room: 309
Testifier position:
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Yolanda Phelan
Organization: Hawaii Association of the Blind
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: sharpersenses@hawaii.rr.com
Submitted on: 3/18/2011

Comments:

House Committee
Transportation
Testimony in Support of HR 37 and HR 43

Date: 03/27/11

Thank you to Representative Henry Aquino for introducing the resolution, and also Representative Joseph Souki for scheduling it .

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you that I am in strong support of HR- 37 and HCR- 43

My name is Yolanda Phelan,
I am a member of the Hawaii Association of the Blind.
I am here today testifying as an individual.

Because I am a independent blind person who uses sidewalks and crosses intersections where there are light signals, stop signs, cross walks that are marked or not marked.

It has been my experience that drivers in the state of Hawaii lack education regarding blind pedestrians.

It has been on numerous occasions that cars do not give blind persons the right of way to cross the street, Instead as soon as the light turns green they proceed and make a right turn with no regards to the safety of a blind person preparing to cross the street.

EXAMPLE:

I have had to wait on several occasions for the light signal to go through another cycle because several cars are waiting to turn right and once one turns the rest follow.

Another situation is when I am crossing a intersection a car will stop in the middle of the cross walk which forces me to walk around their car outside the marked area and walking and into the field of traffic.

Sometimes drivers honk their horn and I am trying to focus on the traffic around me and I have no idea who they are honking at.

Sometimes they honk and yell you have a pretty dog there. Or "you can go now". This is distracting not only to me but my Guide Dog as well.

I have almost crossed in front of a hybrid car when my Guide Dog pulled back as the car made a right turn just as we started to cross. I did not hear the vehicle. These drivers need to be aware that we use sound as a guide when it is safe to cross. They also need to be aware that when a blind person positions their cane in the direction to cross the street that they should give them the right of away.

Another occasion was in a parking lot I was in the middle of a cross walk in the Kahala shopping center when out of no where a silent car drove right in front of us and my Guide pulled me back to avoid getting run over.

I have a friend who was crossing the street and a car ran over his cane it went flying and he had no idea which way it went. He then had to Braille his way home by asking questions of strangers to help direct him.

I recommend that a stronger emphasis be made regarding blind pedestrians in the Hawaii State Drivers manual and that the Driver Education Instructors be trained how to instruct students who are taking the Drivers Education training classes at schools.

I suggest these trainers seek input from members from the blind community such as the Hawaii Association of the Blind.

Recommendations that a stronger emphasis be made regarding blind pedestrians in the Hawaii State Drivers Manual Responsibilities of drivers need to be more specific instead of denoting such a cavaliers approach.

The drivers test must include specific questions to ensure they understand the importance of their responsibilities.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give testimony.

With Respect,

Yolanda Phelan

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From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Friday, March 18, 2011 12:34 PM
To: TRNtestimony
Cc: thomsond@hawaii.edu
Subject: Testimony for HR37 on 3/23/2011 9:00:00 AM

Testimony for TRN 3/23/2011 9:00:00 AM HR37

Conference room: 309
Testifier position: support
Testifier will be present: Yes
Submitted by: Don Thomson
Organization: Hawaii Association of the Blind
Address:
Phone:
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Submitted on: 3/18/2011

Comments:
House Committee
Transportation
Testimony in Support of HCR 43 and HR 37

Date:3/23/11

Don Thomson, Legislative Chair Testimony Hawaii Association of the Blind

First, I would like to thank Representative Henry Aquino for introducing the resolution, and also Representative Joseph Souki for scheduling it .

Members of the Hawaii Association of the Blind have often commented on what they felt was a lack of understanding on the part of Hawaii's drivers regarding blind pedestrians. I discussed with various drivers whether a question regarding the responsibility of drivers toward blind pedestrians was in Hawaii's drivers tests. I was told in every case that no one had seen such a question. This is unfortunate, since Act 75, passed in 1972, explaining the responsibilities of drivers toward blind pedestrians, and when and how blind pedestrians have the right-of-way. I know because I and the president of our organization worked very hard to get that law passed.

Some years ago, after discussing this problem with our members, I was authorized to cause a resolution to be introduced in the State Senate asking that a question regarding blind pedestrians be included in the drivers test. The resolution was heard in the Transportation Committee, and a representative of the Honolulu police department indicated that a question would be included in the future. Because of that assurance, the resolution was filed.

Not only was a question not included in the drivers test, but an examination of the Hawaii Traffic Code reveals that a simplistic and almost cavalier statement tells the drivers to stop if they see a blind person with a cane or a dog. The statement should include the rights of blind pedestrians and a clear explanation of the driver's responsibilities toward blind pedestrians. It must be understood that blind people function at different levels. Some have multiple disabilities. Others were born as oxygen babies, which impairs their sense of direction. Others are still adjusting to blindness and are prone to mistakes. And so on.

I am not arrogant enough to tell the police department how to conduct drivers education as a whole, but we of the Hawaii Association of the Blind strongly believe that at least one question regarding blind pedestrians must be included in all drivers tests in the state; that responsibilities toward blind pedestrians must be a part of driver's education; and that the driver's manual must have a more complete explanation of the responsibilities of drivers toward blind pedestrians.

We feel that it is very important that the resolution pass through the House, and further if possible, so that it is very clear to the appropriate agencies. Be aware that this is what is wanted by the blind of this state.

It must be understood that most states have drivers test that include questions about blind pedestrians what we are asking is nothing new or special.

I have some suggestions to amend the present resolution, first remove the part about last years Senate because it was only antagonize.

There should be a whereas that includes the story about our previous introduction of the resolution in the Senate and the Police representative promise.

A whereas that ask that the State Drivers Code relating to blind pedestrians be improved. Necessarily an addition to the be it resolve clouse should request that the state drivers manual should conform more to act 75, 1972 then now exist.

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman for your time.

Respectfully,
Don Thomson

To: House Committee
Transportation
Testimony in Support of HCR 43 and HR 37

Date: 03/23/11

Thank you to Representative Henry Aquino for introducing the resolution, and also Representative Joseph Souki for scheduling it .

Testimony

My name is Art Cabanilla,
I am a member of the Hawaii Association of the Blind and wish to submit independent written testimony regarding SR 20.

As a blind independent traveler, I often am faced with the challenges of crossing intersections to get to my destination. Most of these intersections do have a light signal or stop sign to aid me in my travels. But, often times the cross walks themselves are not marked clearly or have become faded over time and difficult to make out.

It is here where my safety and the safety for other blind folks is distressing and concerning for those traveling with cane or guide dogs. In the past, I have experienced times where, drivers appear to lack the education regarding blind pedestrians and what to do when a driver approaches a person with a cane or Guide dog.

I have experienced myself and heard numerous times again and again where; cars do not give blind persons the right of way when they are attempting to cross a street. Instead as soon as the light turns green they proceed and make a right turn with no regards to the safety of the blind person who is wanting to cross the street.

Not knowing weather a driver will yield to allow you to cross is nerve racking for most. This is so because, several cars may be waiting to turn right and once the first one turns the rest follow. So, we are forced to wait for the light signal to go through several cycles before we are certain of when to cross.

Another example is when a car approaches the intersection and stops in the middle of the cross walk. This forces me to walk around their car outside the marked area and places me in to the field of traffic which also puts me in harms way of said traffic.

Unsuspecting noises like the honking of a horn is also unnerving to me when crossing the street. As the unsuspecting sound of a horn being blown startles me in to thinking that, it was meant for me and that, something bad is about to happen.

They also sometimes would try and be helpful by yelling out aloud, "you can go now". Unfortunately, this to can be distracting for me. Because, I am focused on listening to the traffic around me and although they mean well, it startles me instead.

The issue of hybrid cars are just another reason educating drivers of blind pedestrians is important. Since we rely heavily on our hearing to help guide us, these silent vehicles are unseen to the average blind person. Therefore, an on-coming vehicle wishing to turn right often becomes a surprise to us. Because, we have to deal with ambient traffic sounds all at once, it makes this type of vehicle invisible to us leading us to believe it is safe to cross. Thus, driver awareness is essential to our safety. Drivers should be aware that, when a blind person positions their cane in the direction to cross the street that they should give

Them the right of away.

From this testimony, I hope that, a stronger emphasis within the drivers examination is made regarding awareness to blind pedestrians and that the Hawaii State Driver examiners be made aware of this addition to the examination.

It is my recommendation that, when assurances to this affect are to be made, input from members of the blind community is included. As we are the ones who will directly be affected by these changes.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Art Cabanilla