



HB1767 HD2
RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLES
House Committee on Finance

February 22, 2018

11:00 a.m.

Room 308

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) offers the following **COMMENTS** on HB1767 HD2, which would help to mitigate the substantial environmental, cultural, and public safety impacts of visitor overuse and vehicular traffic on sites of immense significance to Native Hawaiians and Hawai'i as a whole.

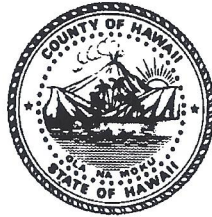
For years, concerns have been raised regarding the growing and largely unregulated number of visitors to Maunakea and Waipi'o Valley, sacred sites of immense significance to Native Hawaiians. Unfortunately, guidebooks, social media, and online websites have increased exponentially the number of people who seek to visit these and other wahi pana and wahi kapu of significance to the Native Hawaiian community. These places, and the unique and fragile ecosystems, resources, and sites they contain, are now continuously impacted in various ways by what may be thousands upon thousands of often uninformed visitors every year, including the combustion-engine vehicles that they use to access such places. As visitor numbers to these sites continue to grow, so does the threat of continuous and sometimes irreparable damage to their environmental and cultural integrity, from both irresponsible and inappropriate activity as well as general human overuse.

Notably, the largely unregulated vehicular access to the Maunakea summit and Waipi'o Valley floor has also resulted in serious public safety concerns, with a history of car accidents due to "brake fade" and other causes on the roads leading to them, including most recently two car crashes – one fatal – on the Mauna Kea Access Road, less than one year ago.

Accordingly, OHA appreciates the prohibitions on vehicular access by automobile types that may be unsafe to operate on the roadways accessing Maunakea's summit and Waipi'o Valley, and that uninformed visitors in particular may nonetheless choose to use in visiting these areas. Such a prohibition may be one potential means of mitigating the substantial and growing impact of visitors and their vehicles on sites considered sacred by Native Hawaiians. OHA does understand that there is another measure being considered by the Senate, SB3090 SD1, that also addresses vehicular access to the summit of Maunakea, which the Committee may also wish to review for consistency.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

VALERIE T. POINDEXTER
Council Chairwoman & Presiding Officer
Council District 1



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HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

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February 21, 2018

House Committee on Finance
Sylvia Luke, Chair
Ty J.K. Cullen, Vice Chair

Email: repluke@Capitol.hawaii.gov
Email: repcullen@Capitol.hawaii.gov

Subject: Testimony Supporting HB1767, HD2 Related to Motor Vehicles
Hearing: February 22, 2018, 11:00 a.m., Room 308

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of myself and the constituents of Council District 1 in Hāmākua, County of Hawai'i, I would like to express our support of HB1767, HD2, and submit a brief testimony as follows:

Prohibits any vehicle, except a low-range, four-wheel drive vehicle, from being driven through or in Waipi'o Valley or the Mauna Kea Science Reserve, except under certain circumstances.

I introduced Resolution No. 485-18, which supported the original version of HB1767. The resolution passed Council at the February 7, 2018, Hawai'i County Council meeting. With that said, I support the amendments to HB1767, HD2 and I endorse any legislation that will increase the safety of visitors and residents of Waipi'o Valley.

I strongly support and urge the enactment of HB1767, HD2. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Valerie T. Poindexter". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Valerie T. Poindexter
Hawai'i County Council Chairwoman
District 1, Hāmākua



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
House Committee on Finance
February 22, 2018 at 11:00 a.m.

By
Stephanie Nagata, Director
Office of Maunakea Management
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

HB 1767 HD2 – RELATED TO MOTOR VEHICLES

Chair Luke, Vice Chair Cullen, and members of the committee:

My name is Stephanie Nagata, Director of the Office of Maunakea Management. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on behalf of this bill.

The Office of Maunakea Management (OMKM) supports this bill. HB1767 HD2 provides OMKM with a tool for providing safer vehicle access to the higher elevations of Maunakea, and indirectly, a safer environment for those visiting and working on Maunakea.

The use of two-wheel drive vehicles poses not only safety concerns, but environmental, and maintenance issues. Drivers using vehicles engaged in low range, 4-wheel drive, have better handling and control of their vehicle on the steep, gravel road and reduce their need to use their breaks and avoid overheating and losing break control. The use of 4-wheel drive also lessens the wear-and-tear of the gravel portion of the road, thus reducing the frequency and costs associated with maintaining the road.

The vast improvements to the Daniel K. Inouye Highway, commonly known as Saddle Road, has been a godsend to the residents of Hawai'i Island. It is a much safer and easier road to drive and has reduced the commute time between Hilo and Kona, and vice versa. However, the improved Saddle Road has resulted in an increase in vehicular traffic to the mountain. Visitors renting cars are no longer prohibited from driving across the Saddle Road in their two-wheel drive vehicles.

Two-wheel drive vehicles are not designed for driving on steep, bedrock and gravel roads, or at high altitudes. It is not uncommon for the Maunakea rangers to come across two-wheel drive vehicles stopped alongside the road with their hoods up stalled from overheating or experiencing transmission problems. Rangers, in spite of instructing drivers to use low gear, continue to witness cars with their break lights on as they start and continue their descent down from the summit. Not only is there concern for the driver and their passengers, but there is concern about potential harm to others should a car lose the use of their breaks and hit bystanders or another vehicle.

OMKM appreciates the support this bill provides by enhancing safer travel to Maunakea.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on HB 1767 HD2.

HB-1767-HD-2

Submitted on: 2/21/2018 7:10:11 AM

Testimony for FIN on 2/22/2018 11:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Paul Paiva	Office of Mauna Kea Management	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Paul "Scotty" Paiva, Chief Maunakea Ranger, I am submitting this written testimony in support of HB 1767. The Mauna Kea Access Road is very steep, curvy, and the lower half is unpaved causing dangerous conditions for two-wheel drive vehicles. Two-wheel drive vehicles don't have the low gearing needed for the driver to keep a safe speed without using excessive brakes. I have witnessed brake lights from two-wheel drive vehicles all the way down the mountain. This means they were using their brakes all the way down the mountain. I have also witnessed vehicles with glowing red hot brakes at the Visitor Information Station. We are very lucky for not having more accidents due to brake failure.

Two-wheel drive vehicles also frequently get stuck in the loose and soft cinder because they lack sufficient traction and gearing causing traffic jams and hazards.

Another problem caused by two-wheel drive vehicles is they cause a washboard effect on gravel road going up the mountain. This puts extra burden on the road crew who needs to grade the road more often and increasing the cost for road maintenance.

These are a few of the safety and fiscal reasons I support HB 1767.

Mahalo,

Paul "Scotty" Paiva

Chief Maunakea Ranger ppaiva@hawaii.edu

MAUNAKEA OBSERVATORIES
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February 21, 2018

Aloha Chair Luke and Vice Chair Cullen,

Mahalo for considering this testimony. I strongly support passage of HB 1767 HD2 and respectfully ask for some minor changes:

Over the past 5-years or so, Saddle Road has been significantly improved. Rental car companies responded by removing restrictions that forbade rental cars on Saddle Road. These changes, combined with the ever increasing tourist population and the rise of social media, significantly increased the number of two-wheel drive passenger vehicles going to the summit of Maunakea.

However, the Maunakea Summit Access Road above Halepohaku is very steep and wasn't built for use by two-wheel drive passenger vehicles. As the General Manager of Maunakea Observatories Support Services for the past seven years, I have personally seen the problems this has caused:

Two-wheel and all-wheel drive passenger vehicles (including two-wheel drive pick-up trucks & vans) are almost all equipped with an automatic transmission that isn't geared to be used in very steep terrain. Without the low-range gearing, drivers are forced to ride their brakes while descending from the summit. All too often, the brakes overheat and partially or completely fail. Most times, the driver is able to turn into the mauka roadside and stop with some vehicle damage and minor injury. Occasionally, the results are catastrophic.

Visitor Information Station staff and Maunakea Rangers continually educate visitors about the dangers of driving a two-wheel drive car to the summit. However, many ignore this advice and drive their two-wheel drive passenger vehicles to the summit of Maunakea. The safety of kama'aina and visitors is our top priority and this legislation will prevent two-wheel drive passenger vehicles from being driven above Halepohaku.

Two-wheel drive passenger vehicles with low range are equipped for driving in steep terrain as the engine can be used to help brake the vehicle, allowing descent without overloading the brakes.

Driving a two-wheel drive passenger vehicle uphill also increases road maintenance costs and tends to create more dust than a four-wheel drive vehicle. Unlike a four-wheel drive, a two-wheel drive concentrates the drive force and has a tendency to lose traction and "chatter" or bounce slightly when going uphill on the gravel road. This causes washboarding (a series of ridges on the gravel road surface) and lots of dust.

I am also asking for some exceptions to the exclusion of two-wheel drive vehicles above Halepohaku:

Semi-tractors used for water hauling, delivery trucks, emergency response vehicles, crane vehicles, ... etc, are typically not "four-wheel drive". However, these vehicles almost always have a manual transmission or an automatic transmission with a low range. This allows them to use engine braking to safely descend the mauna. I would ask that the appropriate management authority be allowed to issue permits for the use of vehicles other than four-wheel drive, when there are no practical alternatives and the vehicle has low-range gearing to allow safe descent from Maunakea.

Sincerely,



Stewart Hunter
General Manager
shunter@ifh.hawaii.edu