



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 02/08/2024

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 2082 RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes comprehensive standards for the department of education related to school bus services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2082, which proposes comprehensive standards.

It has been the Department's practice to conduct equity assessments prior to scheduled service reductions. However, when service modifications are not scheduled – such as when a route is impacted because a bus driver quits or is absent – an assessment prior to service reduction is not possible. Furthermore, any decisions regarding bus service modifications are currently based on rational and measurable criteria, including ridership data, availability of resources, availability of transportation alternatives, and equity considerations.

Hawaii Administrative Rules (HAR) §8-27-5 prescribes the eligibility requirements for ridership whereby all elementary schools who reside a mile or more from a school and all secondary students who reside 1.5 miles or more from school are eligible for bus transportation. The Department prefers to give all eligible students an equal opportunity to receive transportation services. Prioritization based on distance would preclude eligible students living closer to schools from being able to receive bus services.

The Department places the highest priority on providing transportation to students with

special needs and other special circumstances pursuant to federal law such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. It should be noted that the transportation of these students was not at all impacted by recent service cuts.

In regards to an appeals process, the Department has an appeals process already in place under HAR §8-27-10.

The Department is constantly evaluating and adjusting its practices as necessary and is open to having a continued dialogue with the Legislature to find a way forward. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



LATE

STATE OF HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543
February 8, 2024

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Second Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB2082 RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities is in **SUPPORT OF HB2082**, which establishes comprehensive standards for the department of education related to school bus services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability.

Functioning school bus systems are essential for individuals with developmental disabilities (DD) in Hawaii. Many individuals with DD in our community rely on school buses as a primary mode of transportation to access educational opportunities, social activities, and essential services. A reliable and accessible school bus service ensures equitable access to education and fosters independence for individuals with developmental disabilities.

The testimony provided highlights the importance of addressing transportation challenges faced by students, particularly those with developmental disabilities. While efforts to address the shortage of bus drivers, such as hiring external providers like Roberts Kauai, have helped mitigate the problem, there are still instances where students face barriers to accessing school bus services. For example, some middle school students continue to congregate at local parks instead of taking the bus home, potentially due to transportation limitations.

House Bill 2082 seeks to establish comprehensive standards for school bus services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability. By setting clear guidelines and expectations, this legislation has the potential to improve the reliability and accessibility of school bus services for all students, including those with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **support of HB2082**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



Teaching Today for Hawaii's Tomorrow

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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB2082 - Relating to school bus services**

Position: **Support**

Hearing: **February 8, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 309**

Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** HB2082 which establishes comprehensive standards for the department of education related to school bus services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability.

One of the most important ways students can be successful in class is for them to actually be in class. When transportation fiascoes prevent students from making it to school, something is fundamentally wrong with our school system. Oftentimes, the most vulnerable students are left behind without any ability to get to school without transportation options. These barriers compound themselves when students are repeatedly deprived of the opportunity for success through no fault of their own. If we are truly concerned about reducing chronic absenteeism in our school, we need to do more to get and keep students in their seats and ready to learn.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this bill.



HAWAII APPLESEED
CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Testimony for Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for HB2082 - Relating to Student Transportation
House Committee on Education
February 8th, 2024

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee,
Mahalo for the opportunity to express **STRONG SUPPORT for HB2082** which establishes comprehensive standards for the Department of Education (DOE) related to school bus services.

This testimony is being submitted on behalf of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. Our organization works to build a Hawai'i where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. Affordable, accessible, and safe transportation is crucial for fostering economic equality as it enables individuals of all backgrounds to access employment opportunities, education, and essential services.

As the DOE seeks to restore school bus services, it is crucial that equity guides this process. While some students may have caregivers who can drop them off at school via personal vehicles, this is not an option for many of our students. It has been well-documented that limited school transportation options disproportionately impacts students living in isolated rural locations, families who do not own a personal vehicle, families with special needs and differently-abled children, and single parent families. These populations should be prioritized as school bus services are restored.

HB2082 represents a vital step to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability for student transportation services in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.

Abbey Seitz

Abbey Seitz

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Director of Transportation Equity

LATE

TESTIMONY OF
LARRY S VERAY

TO THE COMMITTEE'S ON EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2082

RELATED TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

February 7, 2024

Aloha, Chair's Woodson and Todd, Vice Chair's La Chica and Kila and Committee members. I am Larry Veray, Chairman for the Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21. I am submitting this testimony representing our board as a whole and families that live in Pearl City that require bus service for their children. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony in strong support of HB2082.

The members of the Pearl City Neighborhood Board in their individual capacities strongly support this measure that would establish comprehensive standards for the department of education related to school bus services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access, timely communication, and accountability. The need for this bill was demonstrated by the elimination, on just weeks' notice at the start of the 2023 – 2024 school year, of school bus routes serving Pearl City High School and Highlands Intermediate School without community consultation.

In particular, we note the bill's requirements for consultation with community representatives on the details in a timely manner and decisions to be made on data, equity and alternative options with an appeal process. Given reasonable planning there might have been, for example, minor adjustments to city's TheBus schedules and routes to have provided better service options. In addition, community consultation could have sooner provided school bus service by shared by different levels of school as happens throughout rural America, including Hawaii and Oahu.

The nine comprehensive standards will ensure, as the bill states, school bus service “. . . decisions are made with the utmost consideration for reasonable accommodation, equity, and prioritization of student who live beyond a certain distance from school.”

We most strongly urge you to pass HB2082. Our keiki in Pearl City should not be forgotten and forced to walk long distances especially up a hill to their school. Mahalo!

Larry S. Veray

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:22:07 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Kidd	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this measure

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:03:48 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Kawailani Ozawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha!

I am writing in support of H.B. No. 2082, which would establish comprehensive standards for the Department of Education (DOE) related to school bus services.

As stated in the bill, due to ongoing bus driver shortages, dozens of bus routes serving over 10 Oahu high schools and 4 Kauai schools were canceled in the 2023-2024 school year, severely impacting students' access to school. While the DOE aims to restore these vital services, this bill rightly recognizes the need for formal standards to guide any future decisions about reductions or changes, to ensure they are made fairly and transparently.

These comprehensive and thoughtful standards will promote accountability, transparency, and equity in the DOE's decision-making process related to school transportation, which is essential for our students' access to educational opportunities. I urge your committee to pass this important bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:16:00 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Larry Alfrey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I approve this bill.

Larry Alfrey

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:58:49 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
LINDA SCHOONOVER	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We live jn Mililani Mauka and I have 1 grandson attending Mililani Mauka elementary. I will be having my granddaughter attending kindergarten this coming year. We live little over 1 mile from the school. There should be bus transportation for all public schools especially for those who reside 1 mile and beyond the school district. It would provide safety and assurance that the students. With the past couple of incidences reported of kidnapping in Mililani Mauka area, I don't want my grandchildren having to walk to/from school. There are times us providing transportation are not feasible especially with both parents working and we are elderly. It would be dangerous enough for them to cross the intersection of Meheula and Ainamakua Drive. There are no cross guards to help them cross and most drivers are going way over speed limit plus running the stop lights. There are so many students that live on the same side as us and I see them having to walk. It is ridiculous and dangerous. I feel it is a priority to have bus transportation for those who reside 1 mile or further from school.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:51:28 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shauna Kaulukukui	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support Representative Trish

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:30:29 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nitsala Marx	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I'm glad we are talking about this. When we got the short notice regarding the discontinuing of the school bus services last year, it brought tremendous stress and anxiety to our family. This very short noticed made things far worst. I will have two boys in Pearl City HS next year. I hope that we will come up with a better solution than the public bus. We live in Waipio, therefore catching the city bus to and from school is very challenging. The safety of my boys are top priority. How do we as parents able go to work and at the same time hope and pray that our children will be safe. We should be focusing on helping our children do well in school academically. Why is safe transportation to and from school NOT a top priority? Transportation should not be an obstacle to education. It should be one of the top priority. The public school system has failed us on this huge manner. I hope we come up with a solution for the best interest and safety of our children and please no more excuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to have a voice.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:30:57 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Micheal SC Rompel	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo to the authors of HB2082! Modifications are always necessary. When making modifications that effect the ability of our keiki to get to school, there should be a comprehensive plan and that plan must be communicated early, and often. The goal should always be to make it as easy as possible for our keiki to get to school. We all know that education is the key to a child's potential, and our children being able to reach their potential, determine the future of our community, and our community is all we have! The ripple effect is often not thought of when modifications are made. Please pass this bill! Mahalo in advance!

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:02:24 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
tia pearson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having comprehensive standards for school buses across all school districts would streamline the procedures and make it easier for families that move from one district to another.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:10:39 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel C. Smith	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. My grandchildren were negatively affected by the last minute discontinuance of school bus services at the start of the 2023 -2024 school year.

The nine comprehensive standards will ensure, as the bill states, school bus service “. . . decisions are made with the utmost consideration for reasonable accommodation, equity, and prioritization of student who live beyond a certain distance from school.”

Requiring consultation with the affected communities in a timely manner is the key feature, in my opinion.

Please pass the bill.

LATE

Aloha Committee Members:

A big mahalo to Representatives La Chica and Takayama for introducing this matter on behalf of Pearl City, Waipio, and Mililani. Mahalo to this committee for considering it today. For convenience, I am submitting this testimony for both HB1767 and HB2082.

In 2021, the Pearl City Neighborhood Board, at the request of parents, adopted Resolution 2021-09. This resolution requested the Department of Education seek ways to expand bus service in Pearl City by using vans, small buses, and/or staggering school start times. In response to this request, the DOE disingenuously suggested to this legislature that most kids do not qualify for bus service and that anyone who did already rode the bus. The DOE also reported to this body that schools kept track of parents requesting bus service or those who had trouble with transportation. However, **none of this is true.**

First, we have schools in Pearl City that have NO bus service at all. Secondly, based on DOE rules **ALL** kids qualify for bus service if **space**ⁱ is available or a walk very dangerous. However, if there is no bus at all - the point is moot. The DOE has cleverly carved out a Catch 22 to limit bus service to kids – regardless of need or policy.

HB1767 looks to make the smaller bus option and other exemptions - permanent. This is consistent with Resolution 2021-09 and a step in the right direction. I also ask that this body consider directing the DOE to implement staggered school schedules to help bus service over the long-term. **Schools used staggered start/end schedules during COVID.**

School buses represent one of the largest mass transit systems in the nation. Mass transit is a national mandate. Locally, both the state and the city have made commitments to construct mass transit and to facilitate multi-mode transportation improvements, planning, and land use. Both will benefit from the TOD developments that are expected in Pearl City and Waipahu. And yet the DOE is moving in the opposite direction and creating its own transportation policy.

The DOE once reported that by way of a survey they had proven that parents would take their kids to school regardless of bus service. This demonstrates a huge disconnect between the DOE and state policy as well as the community. School is a **legal** requirement. And many kids do not ride the bus every day – because according to DOE they do not qualify - so they cannot.

Transportation coordination is necessary at both the city and state levels - cooperatively. The reward for steadfast support of rail by Leeward and Central Oahu, cannot be less bus service for our kids. That would be unacceptable.

With that said, I humbly ask that this committee consider amending HB2082 as follow:

- 1) Add language - Mandate **minimum** service requirements for schools. We have schools with NO bus service at all. For example, at minimum, require that bus service be offered to students who receive free or reduced lunch.
- 2) Section 3 – Addition. Include reduced/free lunch students.
- 3) Section 4 – Addition. Require the DOE conduct actual parent outreach/data gathering about bus service needs and usage. The current language is non-specific.

- 4) Section 5 – Addition. Require that public hearings on recommendations are held **in advance** of implementation. The existing language is fact-finding focused and does not require further public input prior to action – just public notice.
- 5) Add language to refence **safety and distance** in deciding routes. This is consistent with DOE rules that currently use both factors.
- 6) Add language – Requiring that DOE transportation policy and assessments be conducted in conjunction with other state agencies like the Office of Planning.

Mahalo,



Charmaine T. Doran

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<https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/Organization/Offices/FacilitiesandOperations/Transportation/RidingtheBus/Pages/home.aspx>

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:53:17 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christy MacPherson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of HB2082. Mahalo for your consideration.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 4:14:04 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Lindstrom	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The purpose of using larger school buses is to transport more students efficiently. Large school buses transport 48-84 passengers safely. They are eight times safer than passenger cars. They also reduce traffic at schools. The problem will not be solved by using smaller vehicles requiring the use of more drivers. Obtaining a CDL is not the insurmountable hurdle it is made out to be. The issue facing the school system is a challenge many school districts have faced. There are two solutions, increased driver pay and incentives while supporting drivers when it comes to handling school bus discipline issues. The other which has proven to reduce the number of required bus drivers, is to go to a tiered routing system. Hawaii's current system could not be more inefficient. Just about the entire school system operates on the same bell time schedule (within 15-20 minutes). This is an inefficient and archaic routing system. A study conducted several years ago showed that the FOE could save \$8-9 million dollars annually and reduce the number of required bus drivers by approximately 15 percent. Tiering bus routes will not solve all manning issues state wide due to some distance and time restraints but it would make a huge impact. Smaller vehicles driven by non-CDL holding drivers could help in special cases involving a limited number of special needs bus routes but not for general ridership. The DOe has made available bus passes to use city and county buses and that has made a tremendous difference but tiering and higher wages would made a huge impact on helping solve the bus driver shortage.

LATE

HB-2082

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 10:26:57 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/8/2024 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.