

Senator Chris Lee, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee

Emily Evans, Individual
(808) 349-6109

March 22, 2022 at 3:20 p.m.

Re: SCR142/SR126

Mahalo Chair Lee, Vice Chair Inouye and Committee Members for your time today.

As a Department of Education employee at the Student Transportation Services Branch I frequently see the challenges that many families face in transporting students to and from school. Per HAR §8-27-4, students living within one (1) mile of their home elementary school and one and half (1.5) miles of their secondary home school are not eligible for school bus transportation.

Oftentimes families are not comfortable allowing their keiki to walk alone, but are unable to walk with them because of employment obligations or other factors. Families living in the walk zone will choose to drive their children to school instead, which adds to the chronic traffic congestion during morning and afternoon drop off.

The car-centric infrastructure in the State proves to be a challenging obstacle for many schools, which unintentionally creates barriers to equitable access to education particularly impacting low- to moderate-income families.

Establishing a workgroup provides an opportunity for a focused effort on a strategic plan that will allow for the needed analysis of the diverse issues impacting each school's walk zone infrastructure. Additionally, the focused workgroup addresses staffing gaps that will allow schools the opportunity to plan, engage and execute safe route initiatives without placing the scope of work and financial burden on the schools themselves allowing them to focus on academics and student learning.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.