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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION SUBSIDY PILOT PROGRAM.

**BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:**

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is currently a  
2 nationwide school bus driver shortage. At the beginning of the  
3 2023-2024 school year, there were two hundred twenty-six school  
4 bus driver vacancies within the department of education, or a  
5 thirty per cent shortfall of the current demand of approximately  
6 six hundred fifty school bus drivers. While the department of  
7 education contracts school bus services to various contractors  
8 on multiple islands, driver shortages have resulted in the  
9 cancellation, temporary suspension, and consolidation of bus  
10 routes.

11           The legislature also finds that the school bus driver  
12 shortage negatively impacts student attendance and causes  
13 difficulties for working parents who juggle jobs and school  
14 drop-offs. In addition, the lack of affordable school bus  
15 options has made it prohibitively expensive to organize school  
16 field trips that enrich student learning.



1           The legislature further finds that the State's severe bus  
2 driver shortage is felt disproportionately by families living in  
3 rural, underserved areas. The department of education has been  
4 forced to implement a series of unconventional programs to  
5 provide basic transportation for keiki attending public schools  
6 in rural, underserved areas. Some measures taken by the  
7 department of education include providing for pay differentials  
8 for school bus drivers in rural areas, purchasing free public  
9 bus passes for public school students, and authorizing  
10 principals or other administrative staff to drive students.

11           In response to the State's severe bus shortage, the  
12 governor issued an emergency proclamation on August 17, 2023, to  
13 address the chronic bus driver shortage through  
14 October 15, 2023. The emergency proclamation authorized the  
15 department of transportation to grant exemptions for the use of  
16 vehicles other than school buses to transport students and  
17 ensure transportation support for students attending department  
18 of education and other independent schools. Despite recent  
19 efforts to incentivize individuals to become school bus drivers,  
20 more needs to be done to address this critical shortage in the  
21 State.



1           Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a one-  
2 year school bus driver certification subsidy pilot program  
3 within the department of education to provide subsidized  
4 training and education opportunities for prospective school bus  
5 drivers.

6           SECTION 2. (a) The department of education shall  
7 establish and administer a one-year school bus driver  
8 certification subsidy pilot program, to subsidize the costs  
9 associated with the training and certification of prospective  
10 bus drivers to address the ongoing chronic shortage of school  
11 bus drivers in the State.

12           (b) The department of education shall establish:

13           (1) Eligibility criteria for prospective applicants to  
14 participate in the bus driver certification subsidy  
15 pilot program, including any qualifications and  
16 disqualifications for entry into the pilot program in  
17 accordance with federal and state regulations;

18           (2) A curriculum or training plan for prospective bus  
19 drivers to obtain a commercial driver's license,  
20 including courses to obtain additional endorsements  
21 required to drive a school bus; and



1 (3) Pathways for existing school van drivers or school bus  
2 aides to obtain a commercial driver's license,  
3 additional endorsements required to drive a school  
4 bus, or training to operate school buses for special  
5 education students.

6 (c) The department of education shall submit an interim  
7 report on the development and administration of the school bus  
8 driver certification subsidy pilot program, including any  
9 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty  
10 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

11 (d) The department of education shall submit a final  
12 report on the school bus driver certification subsidy pilot  
13 program, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature  
14 no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular  
15 session of 2026.

16 (e) The school bus driver certification subsidy pilot  
17 program shall cease to exist at the end of the 2024-2025 school  
18 year.

19 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of  
20 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,  
21 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the



1 appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,  
2 and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure  
3 ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by  
4 \$                    or                    per cent. This current declaration takes  
5 into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal  
6 year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act  
7 only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure  
8 ceiling are that:

- 9           (1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to  
10            serve the public interest; and
- 11           (2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs  
12            addressed by this Act.

13           SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for  
16 the bus driver certification subsidy pilot program established  
17 pursuant to section 2 of this Act.

18           The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of  
19 education for the purposes of this Act.



# S.B. NO. 2061

1 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

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INTRODUCED BY:

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# S.B. NO. 2061

**Report Title:**

DOE; School Bus Driver Certification Subsidy Pilot Program;  
Report; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

**Description:**

Establishes a one-year school bus driver certification subsidy pilot program within the Department of Education. Requires a report to the Legislature. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation.

*The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.*

