

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



TESTIMONY BY:
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STATE OF HAWAI'I | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU
869 PUNCHBOWL STREET
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

February 16, 2024
2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 325

H.B. 1767, H.D. 1
RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) **supports H.B. 1767, H.D. 1**, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

Due to the shortage of school bus drivers, Governor Green issued a proclamation on August 17, 2023, to allow the Hawaii Department of Education and independent schools the flexibility to safely increase transportation options for Hawaii public and independent school students. The proclamation currently allows students to be transported by motorcoaches, small buses and vans under certain conditions.

This measure will include the above provisions in statute, providing transportation flexibility while the State and independent schools work to increase the availability of school bus drivers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



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

Date: 02/16/2024

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 325 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Judiciary & Hawaiian
Affairs

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB 1767, HD1 RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

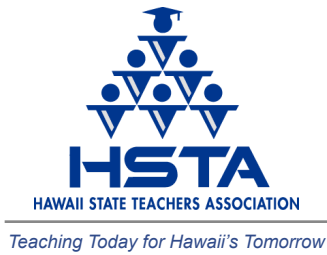
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1767, HD 1. The Department supports the intent of HB 1767, HD 1 in addressing the current transportation shortage, and is open to measures that facilitate enhanced access to education. However, the efficacy of HB 1767, HD 1 in addressing the current school transportation shortage is uncertain, as the shortage is due to a dearth of qualified drivers, and not vehicles.

The school bus driver shortage has been widely publicized and is part of a greater nationwide driver shortage that is expected to increase over the coming years. In the State of Hawaii, regular education driver counts have declined from 288 in the school year 2022-2023 to 265 as of October 31, 2023. The Department's school bus contractors have struggled to attract drivers – including those without commercial driver's licenses (CDL) – despite providing various incentives, which include hiring incentives, increased compensation, and paid CDL training. Additionally, the smaller motorcoaches, buses, and vans owned by the Department's contractors are in large part already being utilized in the provision of special education transportation, and not otherwise available for regular education transportation.

Additionally, the Department would like to note its the lack of infrastructure, resources,

and personnel to house a fleet of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 1767, HD 1.



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

Item: **HB1767 HD1 - Relating to school bus services**
Position: **Support**
Hearing: **February 16, 2024, 2:00 p.m., Conference Room 325**
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** HB1767 HD1 which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

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 students in their seats and ready to learn.

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



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Date Time: February 16, 2024, 2:00PM

**Location: Conference Room 325 & via Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street**

Measure HB1767

RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

Dear Chair Tarnas, Vice Chair Takayama, and Committee Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB1767.**

There is a nationwide school bus driver shortage affecting Hawaii. While the department of education contracts school bus services to various contractors on multiple islands, driver shortages have resulted in the cancellation, temporary suspension, and consolidation of bus routes. The legislature also finds that the school bus driver shortage negatively impacts student attendance and causes difficulties for working parents who juggle jobs and school drop-offs. In addition, the lack of affordable school bus options has made it prohibitively expensive to organize school field trips that enrich student learning. Further evidence finds that the State's severe bus driver shortage is felt disproportionately by families living in rural, underserved areas. The department of education has been forced to implement a series of unconventional programs to provide basic transportation for keiki attending public schools in rural, underserved areas. This occurrence is a public health issue as it affects the education of our keiki and the wellbeing of family structures. Allowing for the transport of students using vehicles other than school vehicles by drivers possessing a commercial driver's license with an endorsement authorizing the driving of vehicles carrying passengers may help alleviate the lack of school bus drivers. The purpose of this Act is to authorize the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services; provided certain conditions are met.

HB1767 aligns with the Vision and Goals of the Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP), by promoting an equitable and resilient transportation system.

The OahuMPO is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on the island of Oahu responsible for carrying out a multimodal transportation planning process, including the development of a long-range (25-year horizon) metropolitan transportation plan, referred to as the Oahu Regional Transportation Plan (ORTP) that encourages and promotes a safe and efficient transportation system to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including walkways, bicycles, and transit), fosters economic growth and development, and takes into consideration resiliency needs, while minimizing fuel consumption and air pollution ([23 CFR 450.300](#)).

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.