



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 1767 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.

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 1767.

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 are not otherwise available for regular education transportation.

For the foregoing reasons, the expansion of eligible student transportation vehicles may not serve to mitigate the current transportation predicament given the shortage of qualified drivers. The Department thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on HB 1767.

LATE *Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



TESTIMONY BY:
EDWIN H. SNIFFEN
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele
DREANALEE K. KALILI
TAMMY L. LEE
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

LATE

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

February 8, 2024
2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 309

**H.B. 1767
RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES**

House Committees on Education and Transportation

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) **supports** H.B. 1767, 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.



Teaching Today for Hawaii's Tomorrow



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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: **HB1767 - 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** HB1767 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 Education

Date Time: February 8, 2024, 2:00PM

**Location: Conference Room 309 & via Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street**

Measure HB1767

RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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.

LATE

TESTIMONY OF
LARRY S VERAY

TO THE COMMITTEE'S ON EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1767

RELATED TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

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 HB1767.

This bill would allow, subject to rules adopted by the department of transportation, motor coaches, small buses and vans to be used in lieu of big yellow school buses requiring drivers with CDL school bus licenses. This would allow designated school staff, for example, to drive these smaller vehicles to provide transportation services for students where conditions warrant. Some parts of Pearl City that are more than 1-2 miles from the applicable school and could benefit from the availability of smaller vehicles for student transportation. We suggest the legislation make clear that it is in fact creating a limited exemption to Section 286-2, Hawaii Revised Statutes, which defines a bus as vehicle for carrying more than ten passengers.

We most strongly urge you to pass HB1767. 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

LATE



Kamehameha Schools®

House Committee on Education

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Date: February 08, 2024

Where: Conference Room 309

TESTIMONY

By M. Tonga Hopoi
Kamehameha Schools

RE: **HB 1767, Relating to the School Bus Services**

E ka Luna Ho‘omalu Woodson, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omalu La Chica, a me nā lālā o kēia Kōmike o ka Hale o nā Lunamaka‘āinana, aloha kākou!

Kamehameha Schools **SUPPORTS** HB 1767, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

Hawai‘i is reeling from the effects of a nationwide and statewide bus driver shortage. According to the Hawai‘i Department of Education, seventy-six (76) bus drivers had quit over the school year 2022-2023. Prior to the start of this public-school year, transportation services at ten (10) O‘ahu high schools and four (4) schools on Kaua‘i were suspended and high school bus routes on Maui and Hawai‘i island were modified.

As an educational institution, Kamehameha Schools understands that the availability of school buses is essential to school attendance and academic success. School buses are crucial in our state, where buses help transport students from rural areas or economically disadvantaged families to and from school. All students can benefit from the expansion of transportation options as transportation for various school activities, such as field trips and school sports competitions, enhance and enrich the educational experience. Student safety is also a high priority, and exemptions for motorcoaches should be granted if drivers receive proper training and standards and procedures established by the appropriate departments for student safety are followed.

We support the legislature’s attention to this issue and urge this committee to advance this measure.

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is an educational organization striving to restore our people through education and advance a thriving Lāhui where all Native Hawaiians are successful, grounded in traditional values, and leading in the local and global communities. We believe that community success is individual success, Hawaiian culture-based education leads to academic success and local leadership drives global leadership.

Hānai i ke keiki, ola ka lāhui; nurture the child and the people thrive.

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/6/2024 3:18:19 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 alternative means of transportation when a standard or mid size school bus is not feasible. However, there needs to be safety and security measures put in place to ensure that we are hiring qualified drivers with the proper training, oversight and safety requirements for driving kids to school.

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 6:17:28 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 of this proposed bill.

Larry Alfrey

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 7:04:31 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:

I am all for allowing exemptions for the use of vehicles other than school buses to transport students. Any means of state employed bus drivers (with general back ground checks) to operate other types of vehicles (motor coaches, small buses, and vans) would be satisfactory just as long as it gets the students safely to/from school.

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:24:01 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 HB1767! Our keiki face enough challenges that prevent them from being educated. Transportation for our keiki to get to school is a basic necessity. No matter the challenges, every student should have access to transportation no matter what their family can afford or where they live. Mahalo in advance!

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 8:56:02 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Daugherty	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a parent whose child was affectedl by not having a school bus for this current school year I think having alternative vehicles provide transportation to and from school would help. My child has experienced having to either walk miles to and/or from school or catch city buses with often inconvenient service times. We have experienced stress and anxiety both for the affected students and as parents unable to provide transportation because we either work or have not had an extra private vehicle available. I therefore support HB1767 and thank you for your time.

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:09:45 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:

Grant exemptions for the use of vehicles other than school buses to transport students. The legislature believes that making this exemption permanent may help alleviate the lack of school bus drivers.

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/7/2024 9:18:22 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. It will provide options to big yellow school buses and help deal with the school bus driver shortage.

This would allow designated school staff, for example, to drive these smaller vehicles to provide transportation services for students where conditions warrant. Some parts of Pearl City that are more than a mile or a mile and a half from the applicable school and could benefit from the availability of smaller vehicles for student transportation.

Please advance the bill.

LATE

HB-1767

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 6:08:30 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 shortage of school bus drivers can be solved by increasing pay and incentives; supporting bus drivers when it comes to dealing with school bus discipline issues, and going to a tiered routing system. Adding additional small buses only increases the need for additional drivers. The CDL is not the hurdle. It is the pay scale, lack of a full time position (bus drivers typically drive and get paid for four hours daily), and not running efficient bus routes. Tiering could save 15% of the needed bus drivers. This will be even more crucial next school year year when the new contracts call for more routes to run than can be supported with the current manning. The school bus is the safest vehicle on the road and carries 48-84 passengers on Type C and Type D designed buses making it efficient when considering student capacity. Adding small vehicles just adds the requirement for additional drivers.

Additionally, the waiver for granting the use of alternative vehicles should fall within the Department of Education. The last update provided on school bus specifications and updated training by the State Department of Transportation was in 1989. Bus specifications and training have been updated by the Federal government and the state DOT has not revised any aspect of their regulations even with the DOE's request for revision. Many other states out school bus specifications and training strictly under the state DOE as they have a vested interest.

My recommendation:

1. Place school bus specifications and training standards under the DOE
2. The DOT should continue to inspect school buses annually.
3. Change school bell time schedules so that bus routes can be tiered between schools. This will save funds which can be offered for pay bonuses to drivers as an incentive to keep driving. It would also reduce the number of required bus drivers by 15% especially if there was adequate time between bus routes.
4. Allow the DOE to use alternative vehicles for specific special needs bus routes primarily, and only on regular education bus routes when declared emergent by the State School Superintendent with the School Board's approval. (Transit, Coaches, approved Alternative Vehicle Contractors).
5. Permanently allow DOE to contract with City and County transit systems for student transportation.

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-1767

Submitted on: 2/8/2024 10:27:45 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.