
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the department of
2 education provides bus services in neighborhoods across the
3 State to ensure broad access to educational opportunities for
4 Hawaii's students, serving approximately twelve thousand student
5 riders on Oahu and thirteen thousand student riders on the
6 neighbor islands. However, due to the continuing shortage of
7 qualified school bus drivers in the State, student bus
8 transportation services have been completely or partially
9 suspended at ten Oahu's high schools and four schools on Kauai
10 in the 2023-2024 school year. Of the sixty-one bus routes on
11 Oahu and seventeen bus routes on Kauai that were cancelled, only
12 one route on Oahu and nine routes on Kauai have been restored.
13 Additionally, high school bus routes on Maui and Hawaii island
14 have been modified due to the bus driver shortages.

15 The legislature further finds that while the department of
16 education is in the process of restoring these services, it is
17 essential to develop comprehensive standards for the department



1 to determine when and how school bus services may be reduced or
2 modified to ensure that these decisions are made with the utmost
3 consideration for reasonable accommodation, equity, and
4 prioritization of students who live beyond a certain distance
5 from school.

6 The purpose of this Act is to establish comprehensive
7 standards for the department of education related to school bus
8 services to ensure reasonable accommodation, equitable access,
9 timely communication, and accountability.

10 SECTION 2. Section 302A-406, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
11 amended by amending its title and subsection (a) to read as
12 follows:

13 "~~§302A-406~~ **Transportation of school children**~~[-]~~;
14 **comprehensive standards.** (a) The department may provide
15 suitable transportation to and from school and for educational
16 field trips for all children in grades kindergarten to twelve
17 and in special education classes. The department shall adopt
18 policies, procedures, and programs as it deems necessary to
19 provide suitable transportation~~[-]~~ and meet the following
20 comprehensive standards:



- 1 (1) The department shall conduct an equity assessment
2 before making any decisions related to school bus
3 service reductions or modifications; provided that the
4 equity assessment evaluates the potential impact on
5 different communities and takes into account factors
6 such as distance to school, socio-economic status, and
7 geographic challenges;
- 8 (2) The department shall establish a prioritization system
9 that gives preference to students who live beyond a
10 certain distance from school; provided that the
11 distance threshold shall be determined through a
12 collaborative process involving the department,
13 educational experts, and community representatives;
- 14 (3) The department shall provide reasonable accommodation
15 for students who may be disproportionately affected by
16 bus service changes due to disabilities, special
17 needs, or other unique circumstances; provided that
18 such accommodation may include alternative
19 transportation arrangements and support services;
- 20 (4) The department shall engage with affected communities,
21 parents, and relevant stakeholders when considering



1 changes to school bus services through public hearings
2 and community feedback mechanisms to ensure
3 transparency and gather input from those directly
4 impacted;

5 (5) The department shall establish specific timelines for
6 notifying families of any planned changes to school
7 bus services;

8 (6) The department shall make decisions regarding school
9 bus service based on comprehensive data and ridership
10 statistics to ensure that service reductions are
11 justified and not solely based on arbitrary criteria;

12 (7) In cases where school bus service must be reduced, the
13 department shall develop and communicate alternative
14 transportation plans, including details on routes,
15 schedules, and eligibility criteria for these
16 alternative options;

17 (8) The department shall establish a clear and accessible
18 appeals process for families who believe they have
19 been unfairly impacted by changes in school bus
20 service;



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1 (9) The department shall allocate resources in a manner
 2 that prioritizes equitable access to transportation
 3 services across all regions and communities within the
 4 State; and

5 (10) The department shall conduct periodic evaluations of
 6 the effectiveness of the standards set forth in
 7 paragraphs (1) through (9), including making necessary
 8 adjustments to improve the equity, communication, and
 9 accommodation of school bus services over time."

10 SECTION 3. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
 11 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

12 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

13

INTRODUCED BY: *Furish Le Chica*

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Report Title:

School Bus Services; Department of Education; Comprehensive Standards

Description:

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

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