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# A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION.

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

1           SECTION 1. The legislature finds that 52,416 students were  
2 enrolled in department of education schools in grades nine  
3 through twelve for the 2022-2023 academic year. While the  
4 department of education is authorized to provide transportation  
5 to and from school for students in grades kindergarten through  
6 twelve, a bus driver shortage has led to significant lapses in  
7 transportation services. At the beginning of the 2021-2022  
8 academic year, the department had a shortage of one hundred bus  
9 drivers, resulting in disruptions to timing and schedule  
10 consistency, consolidations, and cancellations of school bus  
11 routes. In the county of Hawaii, a fifty per cent shortage of  
12 bus drivers led to transportation disruptions in expected school  
13 bus services for two thousand students. Similarly, at the  
14 beginning of the 2022-2023 academic year, the State had a  
15 shortage of nearly ninety bus drivers, indicating a downward  
16 trend in the available labor pool for the school bus driving  
17 profession. Presently, 53.2 per cent of high school students



1 live within a mile and a half of their high school campus, which  
2 would exclude them from school bus transportation.

3 The legislature notes that other cities in the United  
4 States offer student free-fare transportation, including Austin,  
5 Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York City, and Sacramento. A 2021  
6 study conducted by the University of Minnesota and Princeton  
7 University analyzed the Minneapolis go-to student pass program,  
8 a transportation program that provided students with free access  
9 to public transit beginning in August 2013. The findings  
10 concluded that student-reported pass usage reduced student  
11 excused absences by 11.5 per cent and pass eligibility reduced  
12 student excused absences by 27.5 per cent. Further, for  
13 students living within two miles of their campus, pass use  
14 reduced excused absences by 30.5 per cent and pass eligibility  
15 reduced excused absences by 37.6 per cent. In addition, the  
16 study found that pass users had grade point averages 0.28 points  
17 higher than non-pass users. The study's findings conclude that  
18 providing free access to public transit is broadly useful to  
19 improve student attendance and grades, including for students  
20 who live within walking distance of their schools and may not  
21 use transit passes regularly. A multi-pronged approach to



1 student transportation is an ideal method to address equity  
2 concerns and ensure efforts to support school choice and  
3 attendance.

4       Additionally, in 2008, Portland, Oregon began a program to  
5 provide free bus passes to all public high school students. On  
6 average, students made approximately sixty trips per month, with  
7 nearly eighty per cent of the trips being made for the purposes  
8 of getting to and from work, visiting friends, and running  
9 errands. Less than ten per cent of students had never used the  
10 pass.

11       The legislature further finds that a key benefit from  
12 increased student use of public transit is the experience of  
13 using public transit systems. Positive experiences with public  
14 transit as a child can form behavioral habits that often carry  
15 over into adulthood. If transit agencies can encourage taking  
16 the bus as a lifestyle choice in young adults, there is greater  
17 awareness and an increased likelihood that bus ridership  
18 behavior will continue.

19       The legislature also finds that the department of education  
20 distributes an average of six hundred city bus passes per month.  
21 However, to qualify, students must meet strict demographic



1 eligibility requirements, including an active department  
2 identification number. By simplifying the eligibility  
3 requirement, the State can provide increased transportation  
4 options to high school students, including after school and  
5 weekend access to medical care, groceries, shelters, workforce  
6 development opportunities, libraries, and other childhood  
7 development needs. Presently, there is a bus stop within one  
8 mile of nearly every school on Oahu, Maui, and Kauai. Funding  
9 for Hawaii island may also assist in the development of more  
10 transportation options for rural areas. For parents or legal  
11 guardians of students who sign up for school buses, a completed  
12 and signed waiver must be submitted that accepts responsibility  
13 to locate the closest bus route and safe walking route to the  
14 nearest bus stop.

15 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to:

- 16 (1) Require the department of education to collect certain  
17 data on county bus pass usage for public high school  
18 and charter school students;
- 19 (2) Require annual reports to the legislature; and



1 (3) Appropriate funds to the department of education to  
2 offer student transportation through a county bus pass  
3 for public high school and charter school students.

4 SECTION 2. (a) The department of education shall collect  
5 data on the EXPRESS county bus pass program for public high  
6 school students and charter school students. The data shall  
7 include but not be limited to:

- 8 (1) The total number of first-time users per month;
- 9 (2) The total number of active cards per month;
- 10 (3) The total number of blocked or replaced cards per  
11 month;
- 12 (4) The total amount billed per month;
- 13 (5) The total number of taps per month;
- 14 (6) The total number of taps per hour of the day; and
- 15 (7) The total number of taps per day of the week.

16 (b) For the duration of the EXPRESS county bus pass  
17 program, the department of education shall submit a report of  
18 its findings and data collected, including any proposed  
19 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior  
20 to the convening of each regular session, beginning with the  
21 regular session of 2024.



1           SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general  
2 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
3 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
4 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
5 year 2024-2025 for the department of education to provide bus  
6 passes for all public high school and charter school students.

7           The sums appropriated shall be expended by the department  
8 of education for the purposes of this Act.

9           SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on June 30, 3000.



S.B. NO. 971  
S.D. 2  
H.D. 1

**Report Title:**

DOE; Student Transportation; Bus Passes; High School Students;  
Charter School Students; Report; Appropriation

**Description:**

Requires the Department of Education to collect certain data on county bus pass usage for public high school and charter school students. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide public high school and charter school students with bus passes. Effective 6/30/3000. (HD1)

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

