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February 5, 2025

Committee on Transportation  
Rep. Darius K. Kila, Chair  
Rep. Tina Nakada Grandinetti, Vice Chair  
415 South Beretania Street, Conf. Rm. 430  
State Capital  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Re: Testimony in Opposition of H.B. 668  
Hearing: February 6, 2025, 10:00 AM

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Grandinetti and Committee Members:

I am writing to strongly oppose H.B. 668 which seeks to make license suspension mandatory for a driver or registered owner of a vehicle who is convicted of operating a motor vehicle without insurance. Presently, a license suspension is *already mandatory* for offenders who do have current insurance, however, an offender's license is not suspended if they obtained current insurance. This bill cruelly targets the most economically vulnerable residents of our community, and it unnecessarily seeks to take away the incentive to obtain current insurance along with the driver's license.

It is undisputed that Hawaii is the most expensive state. Hawaii residents often work multiple jobs and even then, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make ends meet. Residents are trying their best to just stay afloat with a roof over their head. With a single set back, e.g., missing a day's work, a doctor's bill or even the escalating prices of groceries, an individual may have to choose for that month whether to pay the rent or pay the car insurance. For the offenders who are able to renew their insurance albeit late, the security of not losing their driver's license is the difference between staying afloat and becoming homeless.

Mandatory license suspension, regardless of whether current insurance is obtained, is unnecessary, will increase offenders and will cause significant harm to the community. Preservation of one's driver's license is a huge incentive to obtain current insurance. There is no basis or argument to discourage and disincentivize individuals from obtaining current insurance. In the case where an individual is unable to obtain current insurance, then a license suspension makes sense -- no insurance, no driving. Conversely, it makes no sense that someone who obtained current insurance should have their driving privileges suspended. This is especially true given the fact that the average resident needs to drive to work and care for family and loved ones. Not only will mandatory driver's license suspension discourage individuals from obtaining current insurance, but it will

do nothing to curb the behavior. Instead, H.B. 668 will have the reverse effect. There will not only be more drivers who are driving without a valid driver's license, but there will be more vehicles on the road without insurance which negatively impacts the entire community.

The current law has serious and punitive penalties, but it also has incentives for offenders to obtain current insurance. This is what we as a community want – violators receiving sanctions but ultimately obtaining current motor vehicle insurance. H.B. 668 does not make the community safer but it will have the reverse effect and that does not make sense. This bill serves no one, especially not the hardworking residents in Hawaii.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Sincerely,  
/s/ Taryn Tomasa  
Deputy Public Defender