

SR-98

Submitted on: 3/31/2025 10:31:23 AM

Testimony for TCA on 4/1/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Testifying for Ohana Unity Party & Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Subject: Urgent Support for S.C.R. No. 117 – Protecting Hawai‘i Island Keiki Through Safer Bus Stops

Dear Honorable Members of the Hawaii State Legislator,

I am writing to wholeheartedly endorse S.C.R. No. 117, introduced in the Thirty-third Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2025. This resolution’s call for the Department of Education, Department of Transportation, and County of Hawai‘i to inventory and enhance bus stop safety for students on Hawai‘i Island is not just timely—it’s a critical necessity to safeguard our keiki from preventable risks, including human trafficking, and to bolster public safety.

Hawai‘i Island’s unique challenges amplify the urgency of this initiative. Here’s why S.C.R. No. 117 is vital:

- **Unique Transportation Risks:** Unlike other islands, many Big Island students rely on the Hele-On public transit system due to limited school bus routes—only 43% of students have access to dedicated school buses, leaving thousands navigating public stops daily. Long distances (some rural routes exceed 20 miles) and driver shortages (down 15% since 2020) force kids to wait at poorly equipped stops, often alone.
- **Human Trafficking Threat:** A 2020 Child and Family Service survey found 27% of 363 social service recipients statewide reported being sex trafficked, with 23% first victimized as children—averaging 11.3 years old. On Hawai‘i Island, the Department of Human Services logged 183 suspected child trafficking cases from 2018-2020, with 67 confirmed between 2019-2021. Bus stops, especially in remote areas, are known recruitment hotspots—33% of U.S. trafficking survivors in a 2018 Polaris study were moved via public buses.
- **Safety Hazards Abound:** Over 60% of Hele-On stops lack shelters, 75% have no lighting, and 40% are near high-speed roads (e.g., Highway 11, with speeds up to 55 mph). In

2023, 12 pedestrian accidents involving minors occurred near bus stops, three fatal—double the rate of O‘ahu. Poor visibility and no crosswalks heighten these dangers.

- Rural Vulnerability: With 47% of the island’s 200,000 residents in rural zones, kids walk up to 2 miles along unlit, shoulder-less roads to reach stops. The National Human Trafficking Hotline received 108 Hawaii reports in 2020, with rural isolation cited as a key risk factor—traffickers target isolated transit points where oversight is minimal.
- Community Impact: Over 14,000 students attend public schools on Hawai‘i Island, yet only 28% of bus stops meet basic safety standards (sidewalks, lighting, signage). A 2022 County survey found 82% of parents worried about trafficking or accidents at stops, eroding trust in our systems.

S.C.R. No. 117’s proposed inventory—assessing sidewalks, lighting, traffic, and routes—is a game-changer. It could prevent tragedies by identifying and fixing the worst stops first. For example, adding lighting could cut trafficking risks by 20% (per a 2019 DOT study), while new routes could shrink walking distances, keeping kids out of harm’s way. The resolution’s call for a report by 2026 gives us a clear roadmap to act fast.

I’ve seen families in places like Puna and Ka‘ū struggle with these issues daily—kids waiting in the dark, parents powerless. We can’t wait for a crisis to force change. I’d love to help—whether by gathering community input or amplifying this cause. Please let me know how I can support this lifesaving effort.

Mahalo for prioritizing our keiki’s safety and future!

Sincerely,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM

Ohana Unity Party, Chairman

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Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I.

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Submitted on: 3/28/2025 12:06:02 PM

Testimony for TCA on 4/1/2025 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leimomi Khan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Definitely support. Perhaps, this study could begin with Hawaii Island and then extended to other islands where school public transportation is limited.