



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
KA 'OIHANA HO'ONA'AUAO
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

Date: 04/02/2025

Time: 10:01 AM

Location: CR 211 & Videoconference

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0862, HD1, SD1 RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.

Purpose of Bill: Authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met. Requires State to upgrade to zero emission school buses by 2045. Requires the state agencies to prioritize zero emission buses in the procurement policy for purchasing or leasing motor vehicles. Effective 7/1/3000. (SD1)

Department's Position:

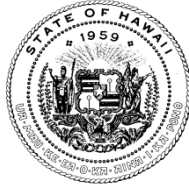
The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on HB 862, HD 1, SD 1.

While the school bus remains one of the safest transportation options for students, the Department acknowledges that alternative vehicles, such as motorcoaches and small vans, offer flexibility for home-to-school transportation. These alternatives are being considered nationally, with appropriate state oversight to ensure safety and effective implementation.

In regards to this bill requiring the Department to revise its policies in regard to the intent to prioritize zero emission buses, the reality of this transition presents significant challenges. This is due to the limited availability of such vehicles, as well as concerns regarding maintenance and reliability. The Department contracts school bus services and does not own or manage school bus fleets. If this bill also includes the Department's work with contractors, the financial burden on current school bus vendors to convert their fleets to zero emissions vehicles by 2045 would be substantial and will ultimately be reflected in higher bid costs or less participating vendors, which would only exacerbate the transportation shortage situation.

The Department thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



EDWIN H. SNIFFEN
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele
DREANALEE K. KALILI
TAMMY L. LEE
CURT T. OTAGURO
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

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

April 2, 2025
10:01 a.m.

State Capitol, Room 211 & Videoconference

H.B. 862, H.D. 1, S.D. 1
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) **supports** H.B. 862, H.D. 1, S.D. 1, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

The HDOT supports this measure to meet the needs of students who need transportation to and from school.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
STATE COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES
'A'UNIKE MOKU'ĀPUNI NO KA NĀ KĀWAI KULA
STATE OF HAWAII
PRINCESS VICTORIA KAMĀMALU BUILDING
1010 RICHARDS STREET, Room 122
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
TELEPHONE: (808) 586-8100 FAX: (808) 586-7543

April 2, 2025

The Honorable Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Senator Dela Cruz, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB862 HD1 SD1 Relating to Transportation Services

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities strongly supports **HB862 HD1, SD1** which expands school transportation options by authorizing the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school services, provided they meet specific conditions.

Reliable and accessible school transportation is essential for students with developmental disabilities, many of whom rely on these services to attend school. For students who use wheelchairs, accessibility features such as lifts and securement systems are not just beneficial—they are necessary to ensure equitable access to education.

We appreciate the effort to address the school bus shortage by broadening transportation options. However, we urge thoughtful implementation to ensure that some of these newly authorized vehicles are designed to accommodate students with diverse mobility needs. Expanding transportation without including accessible options could inadvertently exclude students who depend on these features.

To uphold our commitment to inclusivity, we respectfully request that the bill include provisions requiring a portion of the new vehicles to be accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. By doing so, we can ensure that every student benefits from these improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in strong support of HB862 HD1 SD1**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daintry Bartoldus".

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator



TO: The Honorable Donovan Dela Cruz, Chair
The Honorable Sharon Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

FROM: Philip Bossert, Executive Director
Hawaii Association of Independent Schools

RE: **HB 862 HD1 SD1 – RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
In Strong Support**

DATE: Wednesday, April 2, 2025; 10:01 a.m.
Conference room 211 & videoconference

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki and Members of the Committee:

My name is Philip Bossert, and I am the Executive Director of the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools (HAIS).

The Hawaii Association of Independent Schools is submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 862 HD1 SD1, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

HAIS represents 100 independent schools across the state, serving more than 33,000 students from diverse communities. Our schools, like public and charter schools, are affected by the ongoing school transportation issue, which has resulted in bus shortages and an insufficient number of qualified drivers. This issue has had a direct and negative impact on student learning and engagement.

The inability to provide reliable transportation has resulted in limiting field trips, extracurricular activities, and other off-campus learning opportunities that are essential for a well-rounded education. Additionally, for many private schools, cost is a significant barrier, and the lack of affordable, flexible transportation options makes it even more challenging to provide students with meaningful learning experiences beyond the classroom.

HB 862 HD1 SD1 offers a reasonable and necessary solution by allowing the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans under appropriate safety conditions. These expanded options would provide much-needed flexibility for schools and families, ensuring that transportation limitations do not continue to deprive students of vital educational and enrichment opportunities.

We urge you to pass HB 862 HD1 SD1 to help mitigate the current transportation challenges facing our schools and students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

To: Senator Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

From: Chevelle Davis, MPH - Director of Early Childhood & Health Policy
Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks!

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 862, H.D. 1, S.D. 1 – Relating to Transportation Services

Hearing: Wednesday, April 2, 2025, at 10:01 AM, Conference Room 211

POSITION: STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha e Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT of H.B. No. 862, H.D. 1, S.D. 1**, which seeks to codify key provisions of the Governor's August 2024 Emergency Proclamation on school bus services into law. This bill authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school transportation under specific safety and regulatory conditions, ensuring that Hawai'i's keiki have reliable and efficient access to education.

Addressing Hawai'i's Ongoing School Transportation Crisis

For years, Hawai'i has faced a severe shortage of school bus services, which rising costs, driver shortages, and logistical challenges have exacerbated. The emergency proclamation provided much-needed relief by expanding transportation options, allowing schools to contract with alternative vehicles, such as motorcoaches and vans, to ensure students could travel to and from school safely. However, without permanent legislative action, our students may once again face significant barriers to transportation.

Why This Bill Matters for Hawai'i's Keiki

1. Ensuring Consistent Access to Education

- Many students, particularly those in rural and underserved communities, depend on school transportation to access their education. Without reliable school bus services, students risk chronic absenteeism and academic setbacks.

2. Expanding Transportation Options Safely

- By allowing motorcoaches, small buses, and vans to be used for school transportation under strict safety and regulatory conditions, this bill maintains a high standard of student safety while addressing the bus shortage.

3. **Supporting Working Families**

- Many families do not have the flexibility to drive their children to school daily. This measure provides working parents with peace of mind, knowing their children have safe and dependable transportation options.

4. **Strengthening Long-Term Transportation Solutions**

- Instead of relying on emergency measures, this bill establishes a long-term framework that ensures schools can continue utilizing alternative transportation providers when needed, promoting stability in our educational system.

For these reasons, we urge the Legislature to pass **H.B. No. 862, H.D. 1, S.D. 1** to ensure that Hawai'i's students have consistent, safe, and reliable transportation to school. Codifying these provisions into law is necessary to protect educational access for all keiki and support working families across our state.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **strong support** of this critical measure.



Testimony in Support for HB862 - Relating to Transportation Services
Senate Committee on Ways and Means (WAM)
April 2, 2025

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and members of the WAM committee,
Mahalo for the opportunity to express **SUPPORT for HB862** which authorizes usage of certain types of vehicles, like motorcoaches, small buses, and vans, to transport students when there are not enough school buses available, provided that safety standards and other criteria are met.

The DOE has been grappling with a critical shortage of school bus drivers since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to significant disruptions in transportation services across the state. Despite efforts such as offering signing bonuses, hosting job fairs, and introducing more flexible schedules, the shortage has persisted. By August 2024, nearly 3,720 public school students were left without transportation due to the suspension of 108 bus routes in Central O'ahu and East Hawai'i Island.¹

In response, the Governor of Hawai'i issued his first Emergency Proclamation on School Bus Services in August 2024, allowing the use of other vehicles (such as motorcoaches, small buses, and vans) with commercial drivers to fill the gap in school bus services. Six days after the Governor's first Emergency Proclamation, the DOE announced their partnership with Ground Transportation Inc. and Roberts Hawai'i, securing additional drivers. These efforts resumed bus services for approximately 1,200 student riders and 23 schools.² Nevertheless, there is still a significant gap in meeting the transportation needs of students across the state.

Limited transportation for students has far reaching impacts, including:

- **Hindered Education Outcomes:** The absence of reliable transportation options for some DOE students has placed an undue burden on families, hindering access to education and exacerbating disparities in academic achievement.
- **Increased Private Vehicle Usage:** Increasingly, students are no longer relying on school buses or public transportation, but private vehicles to travel to/from school (for families who have access to a vehicle). According to the National Household Travel Survey, in 2023, 53 percent of U.S. students got dropped off at school or drove themselves to school, which poses both environmental and safety concerns.³
- **Caregiving Transportation Burdens:** The growing reliance on personal vehicles to transport children to school also places a burden on caregivers. Women often bear the primary

¹ Green, J., "Proclamation, Relating to School Bus Services," Office of the Governor, Hawai'i, August 2, 2024.

² HNN Staff, "DOE announces 34 previously suspended school bus routes to be restored starting Monday," Hawaii News Now, August 8, 2024.

³ Federal Highway Administration, "National Household Travel Survey," 2023.

responsibility for childcare and household duties. Additional transportation duties can be particularly challenging for single-parent households where time and resources are limited.

To address these issues, it is critical that the DOE permanently authorize the usage of certain types of alternative vehicles, such as motorcoaches, small buses, and vans, to transport students when there are not enough school buses available. Throughout the country jurisdictions are adapting their school transportation systems to better serve diverse student populations by allowing alternative vehicles for student transport. For example, Arizona permits the use of 11-15 passenger vehicles for regular routes, with increased route mileage eligibility for state funding,⁴ while Georgia allows local boards to use smaller vehicles (8 passengers or fewer).⁵ Maryland amended previous rigid regulation for school transportation by allowing alternative vehicles, such as taxicabs and commercial coaches.⁶ These flexible policies aim to meet the needs of rural or under-resourced areas, where students are less likely to have alternative transportation options.

In summary, diversifying school transportation with vehicles like motorcoaches, small buses, and vans will allow the Hawai'i DOE to better address the mobility needs of students throughout Hawai'i, particularly those who do not have access to consistent or reliable transportation options. Temporary measures have alleviated the school bus shortage but a permanent solution is needed.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Abbey Seitz

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice

Director of Transportation Equity

⁴ Arizona Revised Statutes, "15-925. School transportation; allowable vehicles," February 4, 2025.

⁵ Georgia General Assembly, "20-2-1076. Alternative vehicles for school buses; limitations on use; requirements; insurance," February 4, 2025.

⁶ Code of Maryland Regulations, "Sec. 13a.06.07.11. General Standards," February 4, 2025.



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Ways and Means

Date Time: April 2, 2025, 10:01AM

**Location: Conference Room 211 & via Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street**

Measure HB862 **RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

Dear Chair Dela Cruz, Vice Chair Moriwaki, and Committee Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB862**, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

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 school bus driver shortage negatively impacts student attendance and causes difficulties for working parents who juggle jobs and school drop-offs, and 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. Allowing 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. The OahuMPO **recommends** the addition of active modes of transportation to be added to this list including bike buses, walking school buses, crossing guard programs, and free access for all students to use the public bus. This is consistent with the goal for transportation on Oahu to be carbon net negative by 2045.

HB862 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), which encourages and promotes a safe, efficient, and resilient transportation system that serves the mobility needs of all people and freight (including walkways, bicycles, and transit), fosters economic growth and development, while minimizing fuel consumption and air pollution ([23 CFR 450.300](#)).

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

HB-862-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 11:32:04 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brian H Shimabukuro	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I would like to share my support of this measure to approve alternative methods and businesses to be able to provide transportation services to our public school keiki. The present and future shortage of qualified/certified drivers will pose an ongoing problem. The continuation of and provision of services to students who are in need of transportation to and from school and also to and from other locations is very much needed in addition to the present vendors who are struggling to provide even the most basic of transport services. The notion of place based learning or learning in environments away from our campuses could all but disappear.. Passage of this Bill would help to increase the opportunities for our students to have more positive learning activities. I request that you choose to kokua and support this measure.

Mahalo,
Shimabukuro

Brian

HB-862-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/30/2025 7:50:52 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kori Oros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Dela Cruz and Vice Chair Moriwaki,

I strongly support this bill, as our lack of bus option to get students to and from school disrupted the start of the school year and still affects the students today. For example, our Principal is supporting our the students in our school with 2 paid buses, however in February, when calling the bus company to look for ANY openings for the **rest of the school year**, there were **none**.

Please help us expand our options so we can support our Keiki in public education.

Kori Oros,

Kipapa Teacher

1961 Aamaka Pl.
Pearl City, HI 96782
808-462-8356, dancsmith@rocketmail.com

March 30, 2025

Committee on Ways and Means
The Senate
The Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii

Re: Hearing on HB862, SD1 on April 2, 2025 at 10:01 am

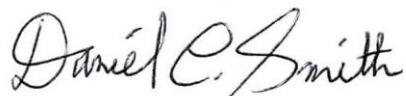
Aloha Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members:

I write in strong support of HB862 SD1 that will allow the use of small buses and vans for student transportation. Legislation will replace emergency orders by the Governor and enlarge the pool of drivers. It is appropriate that the smaller, but adequate, vehicles will not require CDL-S licensed drivers. The additions of SD1, including alternative fuels, are good.

I hope that Increased choice of vehicles will also increase creativity in meeting the needs of students, for example, shuttles to TheBus where regular school buses are not available.

Please pass HB862 SD1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel C. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel C. Smith

HB-862-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/28/2025 8:20:07 PM

Testimony for WAM on 4/2/2025 10:01:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB862. Please pass this bill.