

JAN 20 2023

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



1 half of their high school campus, which would exclude them from  
2 school bus transportation.

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



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

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

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

16       The department of education distributes an average of six  
17 hundred city bus passes per month. However, students who  
18 qualify must meet strict demographic eligibility requirements,  
19 including an active department identification number. By  
20 simplifying the eligibility requirement, the State can provide  
21 increased transportation options to high school students,



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

11 Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to appropriate funds  
12 to the department of education to offer student transportation  
13 through a city bus pass for public high school and charter  
14 school students.

15 SECTION 2. The department of education shall collect data  
16 on the city bus pass program for public high school students and  
17 charter school students. The data shall include but not be  
18 limited to:

- 19 (1) The total number of first-time users per month;  
20 (2) The total number of active cards per month;



1           (3) The total number of blocked or replaced cards per  
2           month;

3           (4) The total amount billed per month;

4           (5) The total number of taps based on uses per month;

5           (6) The total number of taps based on time of day usage  
6           per hour; and

7           (7) The total number of taps based on day of week usage.

8           SECTION 3. The department shall submit a report of its  
9 findings and data collected, including any proposed legislation,  
10 to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the  
11 convening of each regular session beginning with the regular  
12 session of 2024.

13           SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general  
14 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$                    or so  
15 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and  
16 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal  
17 year 2024-2025 for bus passes for all public high school and  
18 charter school students.

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





# S.B. NO. 971

**Report Title:**

Department of Education; Student Transportation; Bus Passes;  
High School Students; Charter School Students; Report;  
Appropriation

**Description:**

Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide public high school and charter school students with bus passes. Requires the Department of Education to collect certain data on city bus pass usage for public high school and charter school students. Requires an annual report to the Legislature.

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

