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

February 6, 2025
10:00 a.m.
State Capitol, Room 430 & Videoconference

H.B. 169
RELATING TO MOPEDS

House Committee on Transportation

The Hawaii Department of Transportation **supports H.B. 169**, which increases the minimum age to operate a moped from 15 to 16 and increases the minimum age requirement for operators to 21 unless they are wearing a helmet.

According to Hawaii Department of Transportation, in 2023 there were 15 moped-related serious injury crashes. Of the 15, only 11 of those were not wearing helmets. Among the unhelmeted riders, 7 of the 11 sustained head and face injuries. According to the Hurt Study the use of the safety helmet is the single critical factor in the prevention or reduction of head injury. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) has estimated that motorcycle helmets reduce fatalities by 37 percent using data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (NHTSA, 2013).

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 7:11:35 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Manabo Sato	Moped Doctors Inc	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honored Chair , Vice Chair and all Committee members. I am Manabo "Robert" Sato, cofounder and vice president of Moped Doctors Inc, a local moped sales and repair shop that has done business in Honolulu for the past 15 years.

We in the combustion engine moped industry provide one of the last bastions of affordable personal transportation for the people of Hawai'i including the working class, students, low income individuals and young people. We **STRONGLY OPPOSE** HB169. Traffic fatalities of moped drivers are the lowest of any category of vehicle or pedestrian consistently with as little as one a year . Increasing the age limit of being able to drive a moped one year will not change this as most fatalities are NOT in this age group

Also, increasing the helmet age from 18 to 21 is a waste of time as there are numerous other senate and house bills currently on the dockets including one that wants to have ALL two wheeled vehicle riders wear helmets REGARDLESS of age making this a less sweeping but duplicate kind of bill effort.

Every year, we in the moped industry see bills which will affect our business adversely. Our business has come under legal scrutiny in the past such as with loud mopeds and we have responded and done our duty as members of the overall community by implementing more restrictive standards such as the sweeping moped safety inspection station a few years back.

People who ride mopeds would have less options . Moped sales may be impacted by parents trying to get their child a legal method of driving beyond just a car (which they as adults would own until the child is of age or 18). And pushing helmets at 21 when there are currently no motorcycle helmet laws (and the fatality rate per year is much higher than mopeds) is simply barking up the wrong tree. All moped riders should be allowed to drive if they pass the test and have it remain that way at 15 with responsible parental supervision. And all young adults should be given the **OPTION** of choosing to wear a helmet or not on their moped, which has the lowest traffic fatality rate of any class of vehicles in Hawai'i anyway. Anything else is an overreach.

Please defer this bill.

Mahalo,

Manabo "Robert" Sato

VP Moped Doctors

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/6/2025 7:24:30 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joe Shimkonis	Mopeds Direct	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello,

Thankyou for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding this bill. I am in favor of raising the minimum age to 16 y.o. to operate a moped but against helmet requirements because helmets should be a personal choice not a law. It should also apply to bicycle riders as well if this is the case. In regards to raising the minimum age requirement to 16 years old I agree with this measure since people of this age should understand how to operate a car before a moped and need driving experience in an automobile before transitioning to a moped.

Thankyou,

Joe Shimkonis

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:18:55 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Pitman	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB169, which proposes increasing the minimum age for moped operators from fifteen to sixteen and raising the helmet mandate requirement from eighteen to twenty-one. While safety is a critical concern, this bill raises several issues that warrant reconsidering.

1. Restriction of Mobility for Young Individuals

Raising the minimum age for moped operators from fifteen to sixteen limits transportation options for young individuals who rely on mopeds for commuting to school, work, and other essential activities. Many high school students use mopeds as an affordable means of transport, and this change could create unnecessary hardships for families who cannot provide alternative transportation.

2. Infringement on Personal Freedom

Increasing the helmet mandate age from eighteen to twenty-one undermines individual choice and personal responsibility. Adults legally recognized as able to vote, serve in the military, and make other significant life decisions should retain the right to choose whether to wear a helmet while operating a moped.

3. Questionable Impact on Safety

While helmet usage is beneficial in preventing injuries, there is limited evidence that raising the mandated age from eighteen to twenty-one will significantly reduce injury rates. Many safety improvements can be achieved through enhanced education and awareness campaigns rather than imposing further restrictions.

4. Unnecessary Government Overreach

This legislation sets a precedent for excessive government intervention in personal transportation choices. Rather than enforcing strict mandates, efforts should focus on incentivizing helmet use through educational programs and subsidies for safety gear.

Conclusion

HB169 imposes unnecessary restrictions on moped operators without clear evidence of substantial safety benefits. It limits young individuals' access to affordable transportation and infringes on the personal freedoms of legal adults. I strongly urge the committee to reject this bill and consider alternative methods to promote moped safety through education and awareness rather than restrictive mandates.

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 9:56:22 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Brandon Haught-Aliotti	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I oppose this bill because anybody who is 18 years of age is considered an adult by law, and they have the right to make their own decisions.

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 10:13:28 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robin Thorsen	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly oppose HB169, which raises the minimum age for operating a moped and mandates helmets for riders under 21. This bill unfairly restricts young individuals who rely on mopeds for affordable transportation, particularly students and workers. Raising the age limit limits mobility and economic opportunities, while the helmet requirement creates an unnecessary financial burden. Encouraging education on safe riding practices and voluntary helmet use would be a more effective and fair approach to enhancing road safety. I urge the committee to reconsider this bill and explore alternative safety measures. Thank you for your time and consideration

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/4/2025 12:37:43 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kevin Oberhofer	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I respectfully submit testimony in opposition to HB169. While I understand the intent of this bill to improve rider safety, I have concerns about its restrictions and impact on moped users in Hawaii.

1. Unnecessary Restriction on Young Riders: Many responsible 15-year-olds rely on mopeds for transportation, particularly in areas where public transit is limited. Raising the minimum age to 16 unnecessarily limits transportation access for young riders.

2. Helmet Choice Should Be an Individual Decision: While helmets are beneficial, requiring riders up to 21 years old to wear one is overly restrictive. Many other states allow legal adults (18+) to make their own safety choices, and Hawaii should respect that same personal responsibility.

3. Potential Enforcement Issues: Increasing age restrictions may burden law enforcement with minor infractions rather than focusing on more pressing road safety concerns.

4. Disproportionate Impact on Commuters: Mopeds are an affordable mode of transportation, and this bill disproportionately affects low-income individuals and students who depend on them.

Rather than broad restrictions, education and awareness campaigns on helmet safety would be a more effective and balanced approach. For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject HB169 or amend it to maintain the current regulations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:02:55 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
lillianna shirley	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The bill lacks clear evidence demonstrating that increasing the minimum operating age or helmet requirement age would significantly improve safety outcomes. Existing safety education and enforcement of traffic laws are more effective approaches than age-based restrictions.

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 9:17:31 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Joseph Rogers	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

i understand personally why this is an issue, i disagree to a point, i operate a moped as my main transportation, i don't wear a helmet because of the blind spots it causes and claustrophobia, it forces me to drive safer knowing I'm vulnerable, and it is safer because i can see cars in neighboring lanes that arent paying attention. because i can see with no blind spots I've been able to safe myself many many times by being defensive when it comes to reckless drivers

HB-169

Submitted on: 2/5/2025 10:23:13 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/6/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Carla canales	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB169, which proposes [brief summary of the bill's intent]. While I understand the intention behind this legislation, I believe it will have significant negative consequences for [affected group, such as moped riders, small businesses, commuters, etc.].

Key Concerns:

1. **Increased Financial Burden** – This bill imposes additional costs on individuals who rely on mopeds or other affected vehicles for affordable transportation. Many residents use these vehicles due to their low cost of operation, and mandatory [insurance, registration, fees, etc.] would create unnecessary financial hardship.
2. **Negative Impact on Small Businesses** – Local businesses that sell, rent, or repair [mopeds/scooters] will be directly affected by the additional regulatory requirements. Increased costs could discourage new riders and reduce overall sales, leading to job losses and economic decline in the industry.
3. **Lack of Justification** – There is insufficient data proving that the proposed changes will significantly improve safety or enforcement. Instead, this measure penalizes responsible riders while failing to address broader issues such as road infrastructure improvements or better enforcement of existing traffic laws.
4. **Disproportionate Effect on Low-Income Residents** – Many individuals use mopeds as a primary mode of transportation due to their affordability. Requiring additional fees, insurance, or licensing measures disproportionately affects those who cannot afford a car, limiting their mobility and economic opportunities.

Alternative Solutions:

Rather than implementing HB169, I encourage the Legislature to explore alternatives such as:

- Improving public education on road safety for all vehicle types.
- Strengthening enforcement of existing laws rather than creating additional barriers.
- Providing incentives for safe riding practices rather than imposing punitive measures.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose HB169 and consider more balanced, equitable solutions that do not unduly burden residents and small businesses.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

carla