



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

February 11, 2025

The Honorable Representative Justin H. Woodson, Chair
House Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawai'i
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Dear Representative Woodson, and Committee Members:

SUBJECT: HB862 Relating to Transportation Services

The Hawaii State Council on Developmental Disabilities **strongly supports HB862**, 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.

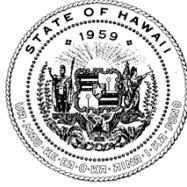
To uphold our commitment to inclusivity, we respectfully request that the bill include provisions requiring a portion of the new vehicles to be accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. By doing so, we can ensure that every student benefits from these improvements.

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

Sincerely,

Daintry Bartoldus
Executive Administrator

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

February 11, 2025
2:00 p.m.
State Capitol, Room 329

H.B. 862
RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) **supports H.B. 862**, 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.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR



KEITH T. HAYASHI
SUPERINTENDENT

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

Date: 02/11/2025

Time: 02:01 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: House Education

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Bill Title: HB 0862 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.

Department's Position:

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

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

The Department is grateful for the opportunity to comment on HB 862.

HB-862

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 3:58:59 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2025 2:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Hawaii Self Advocacy Advisory Council	Hawaii Self-Advocacy Advisory Council	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

The Hawaii Self-Advocacy Advisory Council is in support of the expanded transportation service. We support the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans that have assessable lifts that helps individuals who use a wheelchair for mobility can also use these vehicles.

HB-862

Submitted on: 2/7/2025 4:46:11 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2025 2:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Gabi Soderholm	Soderholm Bus and Mobility	Oppose	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Members of the Legislature,

Unfortunately, we do not support this bill. This bill is in direct contradiction with Federal laws and guidelines for what kind of vehicle can legally transport children to and from school or for school-related transportation.

Fully legal school buses are the safest vehicles on the roads. They are the most heavily tested vehicles on the roads. They are specifically designed to transport children.

Other commercial vehicles like motorcoaches or vans are not tested to this same level nor are they designed to carry children regularly. At the bottom line though, they are not federally recognized as legal school buses for children transportation.

We understand the point of this bill, to ease the impacts of school transportation shortcomings from the DOE. However, the only solution we can come up with shouldn't be to make it less safe for kids to be transported? That's what this bill does. It puts kids in danger of not being in a bus that is designed to keep them safe.

We have tried to propose numerous other solutions. yet none have been taken seriously. The only bill that has been taken seriously is this, which we believe should not be the solution taken into consideration for the points listed above.

Giving schools easier access to purchase their own school buses, requiring the DOE to exercise available EPA funding for electric school buses and place them with charters (75 Type C buses worth), have a State-funded/subsidized CDL training facility and incentives to recruit CDL drivers, etc are all ideas that do not put the safety of children riding buses at risk.

Please consider this testimony when looking at this bill. We are very reluctant to oppose it because we do understand that **something** needs to be done. However, this is not it.

Mahalo,

Gabi Soderholm

Operations Manager

Soderholm Bus and Mobility



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Ann Mahi
Executive Director

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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 862 – Relating to Transportation Services

Position: Support

Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 2:01 pm, Room 309

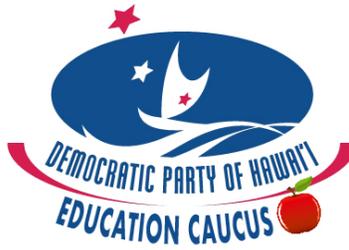
Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) **supports** HB 862 which addresses the critical need for reliable student transportation in our public education system. HB 862 aims to alleviate the shortage of school bus drivers in Hawai'i by authorizing the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for student transportation, provided that certain conditions are met.

Consistent and dependable transportation is fundamental to ensuring all students have equitable access to education, enabling them to arrive at school on time and ready to learn. This is especially vital for students from low-income families, those with disabilities, and those in rural areas who often face additional barriers in accessing education. HB 862 offers a practical solution to address the shortage of school bus drivers and ensure the continuation of this essential service, providing stability and support for our students and their families.

Mahalo.



HOUSE BILL 862, RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

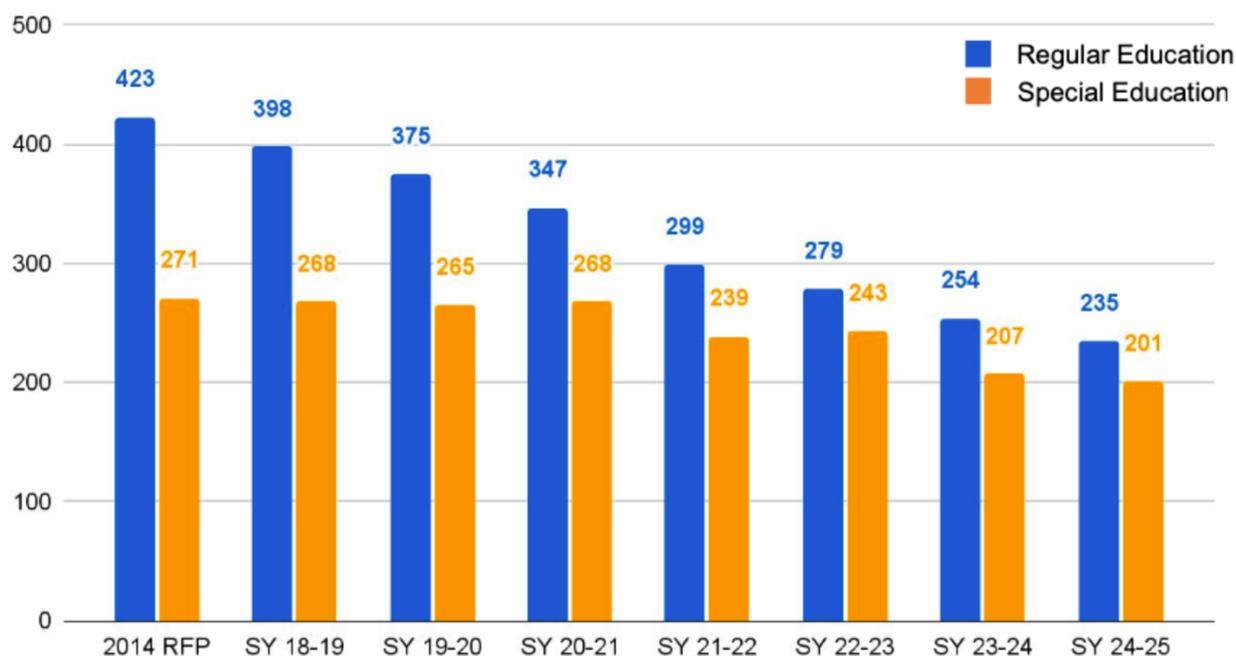
FEBRUARY 11, 2025 · EDN HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 862, relating to transportation services, which authorizes the use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans for school bus services if certain conditions are met.

School bus service is essential for getting students to and from school, particularly for students who lack other transportation options or face hardship in obtaining school transportation services due to economic difficulty. Yet, chronic bus driver shortages have led to the cancellation or consolidation of many school bus routes, especially in West O'ahu and in rural and remote areas of the neighbor islands, reducing transportation options for local families.

Over the last ten years, the number of bus drivers serving DOE students has fallen from 423 serving general education students and 271 drivers serving special education students in 2014 to just 235 drivers serving general education students and 201 serving special education students for the 2024-2025 school year.



This decline has led to dramatic service disruptions, the most recent of which occurred in August of last year when department officials unexpectedly announced that they were temporarily suspending 108 bus routes serving middle and high school students in central O’ahu and students of nearly all grade levels on the southern and eastern portions of Hawai’i Island.

Similarly, in July of 2023, the department cancelled or suspended school bus service for fourteen schools statewide, which impacted nearly 1,400 students across O’ahu and Kaua’i. The bus driver shortage has severely impacted Hawai’i Island school communities, where county bus services do not operate as frequently as on O’ahu and where many students face commutes that can exceed one and a half hours each way.

A lack of adequate school bus transportation service exacerbates chronic absenteeism. Rates of chronic absenteeism are highest in rural, remote, and socioeconomically disadvantaged school communities. In the 2022-2023 school year, 30 percent of Hawai’i students were chronically absent from school, meaning they missed fifteen or more days of class. That was a significant jump from two years before, when only 18 percent of students were counted as

chronically absent, and far exceeds the national average of only 10 percent. Numerous studies show that chronic absenteeism hampers student achievement and lowers graduation rates.

Governor Josh Green announced an emergency proclamation related to the school bus shortage on August 17, 2023, which allows the department of transportation to grant exemptions for the use of vehicles other than school buses to transport students and allows commercial driver's license holders with a "P" endorsement for driving passenger vehicles to operate student transportation vehicles. The order allows for alternative vehicles—such as vans and minibuses—to transport students in impacted communities.

The emergency proclamation also allows for the temporary use of tour buses to transport regular education students, a solution that has enabled school bus contractor Ground Transport Inc. to subcontract with such providers as Polynesian Adventure Tours for student transportation. Furthermore, the proclamation provides critical flexibility with procurement rules, allowing the department to contract directly with additional providers, like Roberts Hawai'i, to supply buses and drivers in shortage areas throughout the islands.

More needs to be done, however, to sustain critical bus service programs for Hawai'i's public school students and their 'ohana.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Education

Date Time: February 11, 2025, 2:01PM

**Location: Conference Room 309 & via Videoconference
State Capitol, 415 South Beretania Street**

Measure HB862

RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Dear Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica, 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.

To: Representative Justin Woodson, Chair
Representative Trish La Chica, Vice Chair
House Committee on Education

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

Subject: Measure H.B. No. 862 – Relating to Transportation Services

Hearing: Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 2:01 PM, Conference Room 309

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**, which seeks to codify key provisions of the Governor's August 2024 Emergency Proclamation on school bus services into law. This bill authorizes using 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, exacerbated by rising costs, driver shortages, and logistical challenges. 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 get 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** 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 OF
LARRY S VERAY

TO THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB862

RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

February 9, 2025

Aloha, Chair Woodson and Vice Chair La Chica and committee members. I am Larry Veray, Chairman for the Pearl City Neighborhood Board No. 21. I am submitting this testimony representing our board as a whole. Our neighborhood board passed resolutions and outgoing letters to the Department of Education stating our requirement for Pearl City to prevent bus service disruptions for our students. **I am in STRONG SUPPORT OF HB862.**

Our student bus service for Pearl City requires a strong infrastructure and uninterrupted service. The Department of Education should have high standards and accountability. During the past few years, the DOE could not meet our requirements to pickup all our students in Pearl City. As time past while they were trying to find and qualify more bus drivers or higher private bus companies, they could have used smaller vehicles where a CDL license was not required for drivers. I ask you to please pass legislation to authorize use of motorcoaches, small buses, and vans to transport students until the DOE can meet the demand with regular school buses.

We should not leave any students behind as we have experienced over the past years of disrupted service and many students having to find their own personal transportation to get to their schools.

Please approve HB862. Mahalo!

Larry S. Veray

HB-862

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 8:33:41 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2025 2:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kaili Swan	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

I am in strong support of this bill beacuse people with disabilities need affordable transportation to get from home to school please pass this bill thank you

HB-862

Submitted on: 2/10/2025 10:31:42 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/11/2025 2:01:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mark Lindstrom	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

There is broad use of the term "vans" and allowing them to be driven to transport students to and from school. In Hawai'i, the term "vans" is often used to describe Type A school buses eg those carrying 15 or less occupants. The DOE should refrain from using the term "vans" when actually referring to small Type A buses as it adds confusion. Also, the federal government has determined that 15 passenger vans are unsafe for student transportation and actually can levy fines if a 15 passenger van is sold to a school system so this bill should ensure that 15 passenger vans are not allowed.

Also, the Department of Transportation last revised their Title 19-5-143 for Pupil Transportation Safety in 1989. This Hawai'i Administrative Rule is out of date and does not meet Federal Regulations when it comes to required school bus driver training. The Department of Education actually has updated their own requirements to conform with federal regulations and best practices. This would not apply to private or independent schools if they only meet the current out of date DOE requirements.

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

February 10, 2025

Education Committee
House of Representatives
Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii

Aloha Committee Members,

I write in strong support of HB862 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.

Please pass HB862.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel C. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'D' and 'S'.

Daniel C. Smith