

THE SENATE  
THE TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
REGULAR SESSION OF 2015

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair  
Senator Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair  
and Committee

Support of SCR47 / SR21

Yolanda Phelan

I represent the Hawaii Association of the Blind

The Hawaii Association of the Blind strongly believe that at least one question regarding blind pedestrians must be included in all drivers tests in the state; that responsibilities toward blind pedestrians must be a part of driver's education; and that the driver's training manual must have a more complete explanation of the responsibilities of drivers toward blind pedestrians.

Because we are independent blind persons who uses sidewalks and crosses intersections where there are light signals, stop signs, cross walks that are marked or not marked.

For your information a similar resolution was introduced in the Senate in the nineties and a hearing was heard.

The police department spokesman testified that the department would cooperate with the intent of the resolution thus the resolution

Was held in committee.

Sense nothing was done about the matter the Hawaii Association of the blind caused the resolution to be introduced two years ago, it was

Passed by both house of legislature without going into detail we received little corporation in the enforcement of the resolution.

Therefore we find it necessary to come back to you to handle the matter.

It has been our experience that drivers in the state of Hawaii lack education regarding blind pedestrians.

It has been on numerous occasions that cars do not give blind persons the right of way to cross the street, Instead as soon as the light turns green they proceed and make a right turn with no regards to the safety of a blind person preparing to cross the street.

#### EXAMPLE:

We often have had to wait on several occasions for the light signal to go through another cycle because several cars are waiting to turn right and once one turns the rest follow.

Another situation is when we crossing an intersection a car will stop in the middle of the cross walk which forces us to walk around their car outside the marked area and forces us to walk into the field of traffic.

Sometimes drivers honk their horn and we are trying to focus on the traffic around us and we have no idea who they are honking at.

Sometimes they honk and yell you have a pretty dog there. Or “you can go now”. This is distracting not only to the person but to the Guide Dog as well.

The department of transportation and others in authority are not taking into consideration that there are elderly blind and others who are not good traveler because of lack of training or who may have multiple disabilities who may be crossing in the middle of the block or in other inadvisable places.

These people have the right of way as long as they are properly identified by a guide dog or a cane.

#### HYBRED CARS

These drivers need to be educated that blind people use sound to cross the street and need to be aware that blind people cannot hear their car running and might think it is ok to cross.

One of our members was crossing the street and a car ran over his cane it went flying and he had no idea which way it went. He then had to Braille his way home by asking questions of strangers to help direct him.

Just five weeks ago a blind pedestrian was hit while crossing in the cross walk on University Ave.

It is known that blind persons have been hit on Kuakinni near Nuuanno.

Recommendations that a stronger emphasis be made regarding blind pedestrians in the Hawaii State Training Drivers Manual  
Responsibilities of drivers need to be more specific.

In the Hawaii State Drivers training manual and that the Driver Education Instructors be trained how to instruct students who are taking the Drivers Education training classes at schools.

We suggest the trainers seek input from members from the blind community such as the Hawaii Association of the Blind.

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Testimony for Art  
THE SENATE  
THE TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair  
Senator Breene Harimoto, Vice Chair  
and Committee

Strong Support of SCR47 / SR21

My name is Art Cabanilla,

I am a member of the Hawaii Association of the Blind and wish to submit as a individual written testimony regarding

SCR47 / SR21

As a blind independent traveler, I often am faced with the challenges of crossing intersections to get to my destination. Most of these intersections do have a light signal or stop sign to aid me in my travels. But, often times the cross walks themselves are not marked clearly or have become faded over time and difficult to make out.

It is here where my safety and the safety for other blind folks is distressing and concerning for those traveling with cane or guide dogs. In the past, I have experienced times where, drivers appear to lack the education regarding blind pedestrians and what to do when a driver approaches a person with a cane or Guide dog.

I have experienced myself and heard numerous times again and again where; cars do not give blind persons the right of way when they are attempting to cross a street. Instead as soon as the light turns green they proceed and make a right turn with no regards to the safety of the blind person who is wanting to cross the street.

Not knowing weather a driver will yield to allow you to cross is nerve racking for most. This is so because, several cars may be waiting to turn right and once the first one turns the rest follow. So, we are forced to wait for the light signal to go through several cycles before we are certain of when to cross.

Another example is when a car approaches the intersection and stops in the middle of the cross walk. This forces me to walk around their car outside the marked area and places me in to the field of traffic which also puts me in harms way of said traffic.

Unsuspecting noises like the honking of a horn is also unnerving to me when crossing the street. As the unsuspecting sound of a horn being blown startles me in to thinking that, it was meant for me and that, something bad is about to happen.

They also sometimes would try and be helpful by yelling out aloud, "you can go now".

Unfortunately, this to can be distracting for me. Because, I am focused on listening to the traffic around me and although they mean well, it startles me instead.

The issue of hybrid cars are just another reason educating drivers of blind pedestrians is important. Since we rely heavily on our hearing to help guide us, these silent vehicles are unseen to the average blind person. Therefore, an on-coming vehicle wishing to turn right often becomes a surprise to us. Because, we have to deal with ambient traffic sounds all at once, it makes this type of vehicle invisible to us leading us to believe it is safe to cross. Thus, driver awareness is essential to our safety. Drivers should be aware that, when a blind person positions their cane in the direction to cross the street that they should give

Them the right of away.

From this testimony, I hope that, a stronger emphasis within the drivers examination is made regarding awareness to blind pedestrians and that the Hawaii State Driver examiners be made aware of this addition to the examination.

It is my recommendation that, when assurances to this affect are to be made, input from members of the blind community is included. As we are the ones who will directly be affected by these changes.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Art Cabanilla