### THE SENATE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE, 2024 STATE OF HAWAII

S.B. NO. 2061

JAN 1 7 2024

### A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO THE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION SUBSIDY PILOT PROGRAM.

### BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that there is currently a 2 nationwide school bus driver shortage. At the beginning of the 3 2023-2024 school year, there were two hundred twenty-six school 4 bus driver vacancies within the department of education, or a 5 thirty per cent shortfall of the current demand of approximately 6 six hundred fifty school bus drivers. While the department of 7 education contracts school bus services to various contractors 8 on multiple islands, driver shortages have resulted in the 9 cancellation, temporary suspension, and consolidation of bus 10 routes.

11 The legislature also finds that the school bus driver 12 shortage negatively impacts student attendance and causes 13 difficulties for working parents who juggle jobs and school 14 drop-offs. In addition, the lack of affordable school bus 15 options has made it prohibitively expensive to organize school 16 field trips that enrich student learning.

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1 The legislature further finds that the State's severe bus 2 driver shortage is felt disproportionately by families living in 3 rural, underserved areas. The department of education has been 4 forced to implement a series of unconventional programs to 5 provide basic transportation for keiki attending public schools 6 in rural, underserved areas. Some measures taken by the 7 department of education include providing for pay differentials 8 for school bus drivers in rural areas, purchasing free public 9 bus passes for public school students, and authorizing 10 principals or other administrative staff to drive students.

11 In response to the State's severe bus shortage, the 12 governor issued an emergency proclamation on August 17, 2023, to 13 address the chronic bus driver shortage through 14 October 15, 2023. The emergency proclamation authorized the 15 department of transportation to grant exemptions for the use of vehicles other than school buses to transport students and 16 17 ensure transportation support for students attending department 18 of education and other independent schools. Despite recent 19 efforts to incentivize individuals to become school bus drivers, 20 more needs to be done to address this critical shortage in the 21 State.



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Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish a one year school bus driver certification subsidy pilot program
 within the department of education to provide subsidized
 training and education opportunities for prospective school bus
 drivers.

6 SECTION 2. (a) The department of education shall
7 establish and administer a one-year school bus driver
8 certification subsidy pilot program, to subsidize the costs
9 associated with the training and certification of prospective
10 bus drivers to address the ongoing chronic shortage of school
11 bus drivers in the State.

12 (b) The department of education shall establish:

13 (1) Eligibility criteria for prospective applicants to 14 participate in the bus driver certification subsidy pilot program, including any qualifications and 15 16 disgualifications for entry into the pilot program in accordance with federal and state regulations; 17 18 (2) A curriculum or training plan for prospective bus drivers to obtain a commercial driver's license, 19 20 including courses to obtain additional endorsements 21 required to drive a school bus; and

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(3) Pathways for existing school van drivers or school bus
 aides to obtain a commercial driver's license,
 additional endorsements required to drive a school
 bus, or training to operate school buses for special
 education students.

6 (c) The department of education shall submit an interim
7 report on the development and administration of the school bus
8 driver certification subsidy pilot program, including any
9 proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty
10 days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2025.

(d) The department of education shall submit a final report on the school bus driver certification subsidy pilot program, including any proposed legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 2026.

16 (e) The school bus driver certification subsidy pilot 17 program shall cease to exist at the end of the 2024-2025 school 18 year.

19 SECTION 3. In accordance with section 9 of article VII of
20 the Hawaii State Constitution and sections 37-91 and 37-93,
21 Hawaii Revised Statutes, the legislature has determined that the

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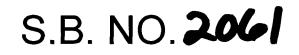
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1	appropriations contained in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023,
2	and this Act will cause the state general fund expenditure
3	ceiling for fiscal year 2024-2025 to be exceeded by
4	\$ or per cent. This current declaration takes
5	into account general fund appropriations authorized for fiscal
6	year 2024-2025 in Act 164, Regular Session of 2023, and this Act
7	only. The reasons for exceeding the general fund expenditure
8	ceiling are that:
9	(1) The appropriation made in this Act is necessary to
10	serve the public interest; and
11	(2) The appropriation made in this Act meets the needs
12	addressed by this Act.
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 2024-2025 for
16	the bus driver certification subsidy pilot program established
17	pursuant to section 2 of this Act.
18	The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of

19 education for the purposes of this Act.

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SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.

INTRODUCED BY:



#### Report Title:

DOE; School Bus Driver Certification Subsidy Pilot Program; Report; Expenditure Ceiling; Appropriation

### Description:

Establishes a one-year school bus driver certification subsidy pilot program within the Department of Education. Requires a report to the Legislature. Declares that the general fund expenditure ceiling is exceeded. Makes an appropriation.

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

