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



1 live within a mile and a half of their high school campus, which
2 would exclude them from school bus transportation.

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



1 method to address equity concerns and ensure efforts to support
2 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 with public transit as a child 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:

- 12 (1) Require the department of education to collect certain
13 data on city bus pass usage for public high school and
14 charter school students;
- 15 (2) Require annual reports to the legislature; and
- 16 (3) Appropriate funds to the department of education to
17 offer student transportation through a city bus pass
18 for public high school and charter school students.

19 SECTION 2. The department of education shall collect data
20 on the city bus pass program for public high school students and



1 charter school students. The data shall include but not be
2 limited to:

- 3 (1) The total number of first-time users per month;
- 4 (2) The total number of active cards per month;
- 5 (3) The total number of blocked or replaced cards per
6 month;
- 7 (4) The total amount billed per month;
- 8 (5) The total number of taps based on uses per month;
- 9 (6) The total number of taps based on time of day usage
10 per hour; and
- 11 (7) The total number of taps based on day of week usage.

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

17 SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general
18 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ _____ or so
19 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2023-2024 and
20 the same sum or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal



1 year 2024-2025 for bus passes for all public high school and
2 charter school students.

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

5 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2023.



Report Title:

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

Description:

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. Appropriates funds to the Department of Education to provide public high school and charter school students with bus passes. (SD1)

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