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GOVERNOR



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SUPERINTENDENT

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Date: 02/09/2023
Time: 02:30 PM
Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE
Committee: House Education

Department: Education
Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education
Title of Bill: HB 1330 RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.
Purpose of Bill: Appropriates funds to the department of education for school bus services.

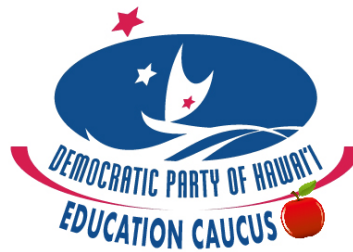
Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 1330 to appropriate funds for school bus services. This appropriation would allow the Department flexibility in supporting our current bus contractor staff, expand the pool of qualified drivers at the school level, and waive school bus fees until consistent service can resume.

Increased funding for the next two (2) fiscal years (2023-2024 and 2024-2025) would allow the Department to increase contractor payments to accommodate driver differential pay statewide. The entirety of the daily rate increases would be directed to driver pay and benefits, and the contractor would be held accountable for no less than 30% of route reactivation for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years.

Increased funding for school bus service could also provide other avenues for meeting the challenges of finding qualified bus drivers. These funds could be used to encourage school-level staff with some initial training to move forward with becoming a qualified bus driver. Since these employees have already passed some of the initial driver requirements as outlined in the Hawaii Administrative Rule 19-143, they could be good candidates as support staff in the midst of the driver shortage. Encouraging school staff to complete the driver requirements and training could increase qualified driver availability in areas like Hawaii County, where the driver shortage has had the most impact.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



HOUSE BILL 1330, RELATING TO SCHOOL BUS SERVICE

FEBRUARY 9, 2023 · HOUSE EDUCATION
COMMITTEE · CHAIR REP. JUSTIN H. WOODSON

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1330, relating to school bus service, which appropriates funds to the DOE for school bus services.

If students can't get to school, they can't learn. Makes sense, right?

As this bill's preamble notes, the nationwide shortage of bus drivers that is being experienced by 80 percent of school districts has caused route cancellations and transportation disruptions for many working families. Around 33,000 students across the islands the rely on DOE school buses to commute to and from school each day.

Yet, 150 out of 700 bus driver positions were left vacant as of September of 2022, despite efforts to increase pay and provide recruitment incentives. A lack of school bus drivers particularly impacts rural and remote areas, which are already experiencing high rates of chronic absenteeism. It is imperative that we provide additional funding to help our keiki attend school, so that they are not shortchanged on their education because of transportation inequity.

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