

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION
Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau
P.O. BOX 259
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540
FAX NO: (808) 587-1560

GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. No. 1879, H.D.1, Relating to Public Transit

BEFORE THE:

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

DATE: Tuesday, February 17, 2026
TIME: 9:30 a.m.
LOCATION: State Capitol, Conference Room 329

Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding H.B. 1879, H.D.1, for your consideration.

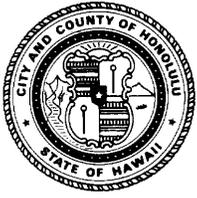
H.B. 1879, H.D.1, establishes within the Department of Transportation (HDOT) a Subsidized Youth Transit Program, to be coordinated with the counties, and a Subsidized Youth Transit Program Special Fund. It also allocates monies from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax ("barrel tax") to this fund, appropriates monies into and out of this fund, and requires HDOT to submit reports to the Legislature.

Section 3 of the bill amends section 243-3.5(a)-(b), HRS, prescribing new allocations from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax. Specifically, it allocates 38 cents out of the existing \$1.05 per barrel tax on petroleum products and 7 cents or 36.8 per cent out of the existing 19 cents per each one million British thermal units tax on non-petroleum fossil fuels to the fund.

The bill has a defective effective date of July 1, 3000, except for Sections 5 and 6, regarding appropriations into the fund, which take effect on July 1, 2026.

DOTAX recommends that the effective date for section 3 of the bill, regarding the new fund and allocations, be amended to July 1, 2026, to provide sufficient time to make the necessary changes to implement the new allocations from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.



HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU
530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

MATT WEYER
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT II
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5002
FAX: (808) 768-1222
EMAIL: mweyer@honolulu.gov

February 13, 2026

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

RE: Testimony in Support of HB1879 HD1

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

I write in **strong support** of House Bill 1879 HD1, relating to public transit, which would establish a subsidized youth transit program to be coordinated with the counties.

Transportation costs remain a significant burden for many families on O'ahu. HB 1879 will help to alleviate this burden by ensuring that our youth have access to public transit without cost, regardless of where they live or attend school. This will not only improve access to schools, jobs, healthcare, and extracurricular activities, it will also support safer streets and reduced traffic congestion by encouraging fewer car trips and greater use of buses and rail.

HB 1879 will further advance Hawai'i's environmental and climate goals by increasing transit ridership and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Encouraging youth to use public transportation builds long-term habits that contribute to emissions reduction and a more sustainable transportation system.

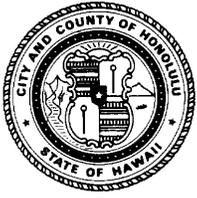
HB 1879 is an investment in Hawai'i's keiki, families, and future. It promotes equity, affordability, and environmental responsibility while strengthening our public transit system statewide. For these reasons, I strongly support HB 1879 and urge its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Weyer", is written over a horizontal line.

Matt Weyer
Councilmember, District 2
Honolulu City Council



HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU
530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

MATT WEYER
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT II
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5002
FAX: (808) 768-1222
EMAIL: mweyer@honolulu.gov

February 13, 2026

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair

RE: Testimony in Support of HB1879 HD1

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice-Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

I write in **strong support** of House Bill 1879 HD1, relating to public transit, which would establish a subsidized youth transit program to be coordinated with the counties.

Transportation costs remain a significant burden for many families on O'ahu. HB 1879 will help to alleviate this burden by ensuring that our youth have access to public transit without cost, regardless of where they live or attend school. This will not only improve access to schools, jobs, healthcare, and extracurricular activities, it will also support safer streets and reduced traffic congestion by encouraging fewer car trips and greater use of buses and rail.

HB 1879 will further advance Hawai'i's environmental and climate goals by increasing transit ridership and reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Encouraging youth to use public transportation builds long-term habits that contribute to emissions reduction and a more sustainable transportation system.

HB 1879 is an investment in Hawai'i's keiki, families, and future. It promotes equity, affordability, and environmental responsibility while strengthening our public transit system statewide. For these reasons, I strongly support HB 1879 and urge its passage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

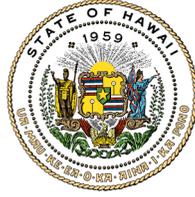
Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Weyer", is written over a horizontal line.

Matt Weyer
Councilmember, District 2
Honolulu City Council

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR | KE KIA'ĀINA

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

P.O. BOX 621
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809

DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
LEAH LARAMEE
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission
Co-Chair Ryan K. P. Kanaka'ole**

**Before the House Committee on
HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 329**

**In consideration of
HOUSE BILL 1879 HOUSE DRAFT 1
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

House Bill 1879, House Draft 1 proposes to establish within the Department of Transportation (DOT) a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Authorize the DOT to adopt rules, expand eligibility, and consult with the Department of Education on best practices, under certain conditions. The bill would establish the subsidized youth transit program special fund, require biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, allocate funds from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit program special fund, and appropriate funds into and out of the subsidized youth transit program special fund. **The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) supports this measure.**

The Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 departments, committees, and counties with the purpose of promoting ambitious, climate-neutral, culturally responsive strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

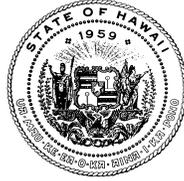
The cost of living in Hawai'i continues to balloon, leaving many residents struggling to meet every day needs such as transportation. House Draft 1 changes the original free ride program to a need-based subsidy program. This change would reduce the pool of eligible riders and limit the measure's impacts on traffic congestion and emissions reduction. Creating a need-based system also increases administrative costs which could instead be used to subsidize youth fares.

Studies have shown that public transit use as a youth often carries forward into adulthood. This can result in transit habits that reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions, while creating healthier communities.¹

The Commission respectfully recommends reverting to the original keiki ride free program which is estimated to reduce emissions by 61,469 metric tons of carbon dioxide over 20 years, the equivalent of taking 13,000 cars off the road

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

¹ <https://www.theenergymix.com/opinion-want-stronger-public-transport-and-better-communities-get-youth-hooked-on-transit/>



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO
P.O. Box 3378
Honolulu, HI 96801-3378
doh.testimony@doh.hawaii.gov

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 1879, H.D. 1
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Hearing Date: February 17, 2026
9:30 AM

Room Number: Conference Room 329
and Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (DOH) defers to the Department of
2 Transportation (DOT) for fiscal implications of implementation.

3 **Department Position:** The DOH supports House Bill 1879, House Draft 1 (H.B. 1879, H.D. 1),
4 which establishes within the DOT a Subsidized Youth Transit Program to be coordinated with
5 the counties. The measure also establishes a subsidized youth transit program special fund,
6 requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, and allocates moneys from
7 the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit
8 program special fund.

9 **Department Testimony:** The establishment of a subsidized youth transit program is a
10 significant step forward in advancing a public health framework that prioritizes equity, safety,
11 and environmental resilience.¹ By removing financial barriers to public transit, this measure
12 will address a critical social determinant of health, ensuring that a child's socioeconomic status
13 does not limit their access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and nutritious
14 food. This universal, subsidized system replaces fragmented county programs with a solution

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Impacts of Fare-Free Programs on Transit Ridership and Equity. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2023.

<https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27171/>

1 that eases the financial burden on Hawaii's families while fostering independence and
2 confidence in our keiki.

3 Despite Hawaii's favorable climate, geography, and reputation for active outdoor living,
4 only 33% of adult and 18% of high school students in Hawaii met federal guidelines for physical
5 activity.^{2,3} The design of roads that integrate active transportation options like walking,
6 bicycling, and transit is a public health concern since the safety and accessibility of a
7 community's built environment can promote or hinder physical activity. This includes removing
8 barriers to safely and conveniently accessing active transportation options to destinations such
9 as schools, shopping, and worksites. Safe, accessible, and walkable communities encourage
10 physical activity and can promote better health outcomes in communities whose populations
11 are at less risk for serious chronic diseases and conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and
12 diabetes.⁴

13 From a safety perspective, this bill directly supports the State's commitment to Vision
14 Zero (Hawaii Revised Statutes §286-7), which aims to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and
15 serious injuries. Shifting youth trips from private vehicles to public transit reduces overall
16 vehicle miles traveled (VMT), thereby lowering traffic congestion and the statistical likelihood of
17 roadway accidents. Furthermore, public transit promotes "active transportation," as most
18 transit trips involve walking or biking to and from stops. By encouraging these habits early in
19 life, we can increase physical activity levels and combat the long-term prevalence of chronic
20 diseases associated with sedentary lifestyles.⁵ Establishing a culture of transit ridership in our

² Hawaii Health Data Warehouse, Hawaii State Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023.

³ Hawaii Health Data Warehouse, Hawaii State Department of Health, Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, 2023; https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/PhysActMeetRec/PhysActMeetRec_HS_ST.html.

⁴ CDC *About Physical Activity*. 2021.

⁵ Saelens BE, Vernez Moudon A, Kang B, Hurvitz PM, Zhou C. Relation between public transit use and physical activity. *Am J Public Health*. 2014;104(5):854-859. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302101

1 youth will yield dividends for generations to come, creating a more sustainable, and healthy
2 Hawaii.

3 **Offered Amendments:** None

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



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

Date: 02/17/2026

Time: 09:30 AM

Location: 329 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: HSH

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1879, HD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Authorizes the Department to adopt rules, expand eligibility, and consult with the Department of Education on best practices, under certain conditions. Establishes the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund. Allocates funds from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Appropriates funds into and out of the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) would like to provide comments on HB 1879, HD1, relating to the establishment of a subsidized youth transit program amongst the counties of the State.

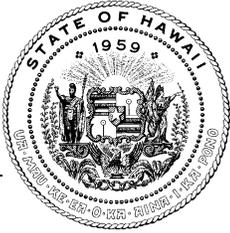
The Department recognizes that HD 1 introduces income-based and need-based parameters for eligibility. While we appreciate the Legislature's intent to focus limited resources on students and families with the greatest financial need, the new eligibility criteria represent a significant shift from the original measure, which was intended to provide universal, barrier-free transit access for all youth. Universal access would help ensure that transportation supports not only school attendance, but also participation in athletics, clubs, cultural programs, enrichment, work opportunities, and other activities that contribute to whole-child development.

In addition, the Department notes that the HD 1 eligibility criteria does not consider distance from a student's attending school or program—one of the most common and consequential barriers families face. Distance-based challenges affect students across income levels, including those who may not qualify for income-based programs but still experience substantial transportation burdens.

The introduction of multiple need-based eligibility tiers may also impose additional administrative and verification requirements on schools and families.

These processes could unintentionally delay or restrict access for students who rely on consistent, predictable transit options to fully participate in school and community life.

The Department thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment on this measure.



HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

235 South Beretania Street, 5th Floor, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2359, Honolulu, Hawaii 96804

Telephone:
Web:

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR

MARK B. GLICK
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

(808) 451-6648
energy.hawaii.gov

Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 329 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on
HOUSE BILL NO. 1879 HD1

RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers the following comments on HB1879 HD1, which establishes a Subsidized Youth Transit Program within the Hawai'i Department of Transportation in coordination with county transit services, prioritizing access for youth who demonstrate financial or social need, to be paid by an increase in the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

HSEO appreciates the Legislature's continued focus on improving access to affordable, equitable transportation options for Hawai'i's residents, particularly children and youth. Transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and policies that expand access to efficient, shared transportation modes can play an important role in advancing the State's long-term energy and climate objectives.

Hawai'i has established ambitious statutory goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by fifty percent by 2030 and achieve net negative emissions by 2045. Increasing public transit use, especially for routine trips such as school, extracurricular activities and community services, is among a portfolio of strategies needed to achieve those goals, which also include reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improved system efficiency, and expanded access to low- and zero-emission mobility options.

HSEO's 2023 *Pathways to Decarbonization* Report emphasizes that reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for short and frequent trips, is an important complement to vehicle electrification. The report highlights land use, travel behavior, and access to shared transportation as key drivers of transportation energy demand. Programs that lower barriers to transit use for youth and families can shape long-term travel patterns while providing household cost savings and mobility benefits.

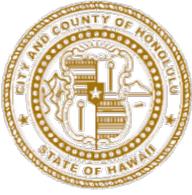
HSEO also notes that transportation mode choice depends on factors beyond fare levels, including service frequency, reliability, travel time, safety, and connectivity. Data collection and evaluation are needed to understand how subsidized youth transit access and prioritized eligibility affect ridership, system performance, and emissions and to inform future policy decisions. Accordingly, HSEO appreciates the bill's emphasis on data-driven evaluation.

HSEO further notes that the bill authorizes the Department of Transportation to expand eligibility to additional youth populations subject to sufficient funding, which may allow for future program growth as resources permit.

Finally, HSEO recognizes that youth access to transit supports broader state priorities related to equity, public health, and safety. For households facing transportation cost burdens or limited access to private vehicles, reliable transit can improve access to education, extracurricular activities, and essential services.

HSEO defers to the Department of Budget and Finance on the budgetary impact of redistribution of the environmental response, energy, and food security tax funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
KE KANIHELA O KE KALANA O HONOLULU
530 S. KING ST. STE. 202, HONOLULU, HI 96813

TYLER DOS SANTOS-TAM
HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT 6
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5006
FAX: (808) 768-1176
EMAIL: tdossantos-tam@honolulu.gov

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:30 AM

HB 1879 CD1 Testimony in Support

Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, & Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness:

My name is Councilmember Tyler Dos Santos-Tam, and I have the privilege of representing parts of Urban Honolulu from Kalihi Valley to Kaka'ako on the Honolulu City Council. I am pleased to submit **strong support on HB1879**, Relating to Public Transit. This measure establishes a fare-free youth transit program with the Hawai'i State Department of Transportation that would be coordinated with the counties.

As a bus rider, I strongly believe in the value of public transportation. As a bus rider, I also have the daily privilege to interact with the O'ahu residents who also ride TheBus. Public transit is a critical piece of our community. It is a lifeline to many, bringing them to school, work, doctors' appointments, a variety of stores and many other places. Those who ride TheBus also are the largest detractor of auto traffic and lead the way in decreasing carbon emissions. The majority of riders (60%) make below \$50,000 and 71% have household incomes below \$60,000.ⁱ

By allowing **all keiki** to ride free, we can increase their accessibility to school, jobs, and other essential trips. By removing the fares, we encourage more keiki to ride public transit leading to higher ridership thus becoming more likely to become lifelong mass transit users. Riding public transit encourages independence and confidence all while helping Hawai'i to meet its commitments of supporting decarbonization efforts.

Furthermore, access for youth to free mass transit is a way that we can help to support families who need it the most. It is time for us to open pathways of affordability to all of Hawai'i's residents. This program will achieve that goal. This bill supports families, lessens carbon emissions, incentivizes drivers to utilize mass transit, helps to address the shortage of school bus drivers, and encourages lifelong mass transit riders.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit supportive testimony for SHB1879.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tyler Dos Santos-Tam".

Tyler Dos Santos-Tam
Councilmember, District 6
Honolulu City Council

ⁱ <https://www.honolulu.gov/dts/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/2025/08/Final-2025-DTS-Public-Transit-TVI-Program-Report-08-2025.pdf>



February 13, 2026

**Testimony in Support of H.B. 1879 HD1
Relating to Public Transit**

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee,

Aloha United Way supports H.B. 1879 HD1, which establishes a subsidized youth transit program to improve access to transportation for children and families across Hawai'i.

Transportation is a critical part of financial stability. For many ALICE households, who make up nearly 40%¹ of families in Hawai'i, reliable and affordable transportation determines whether children can get to school, activities, medical appointments, and other essential services. When transportation costs rise, families are forced to make difficult tradeoffs between basic needs.

A subsidized youth transit program can reduce household expenses, improve access to opportunity, and promote greater equity across communities, especially for low-income and rural families. By prioritizing youth with financial or social need, this measure helps ensure that limited resources reach the households who need them most.

In addition to supporting families, increased youth transit use advances the State's environmental and congestion-reduction goals, creating benefits for the broader community.

For these reasons, Aloha United Way respectfully urges your support for H.B. 1879 HD1.

Mahalo,

Michelle Bartell
President & CEO
Aloha United Way

¹ <https://www.auw.org/about/alice-initiative/alice-reports/>



Chair Marten
Vice Chair Olds
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:30 AM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB1879 HD1 RELATING TO PUBLIC
TRANSIT**

Aloha Members of the House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness,

The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission was first created through Act 106 in 2018, “to advise the governor and legislature on the effects of legislative policies, needs, assessments, priorities, programs, and budgets concerning the youth of the State.” The Hawai‘i State Youth Commission’s Environment legislative committee is in **strong support** of **HB1879 HD1**.

Transportation is a basic educational necessity. Studies of K–12 students have shown that when young people receive free passes, they attend school more regularly and are more likely to succeed academically, because they can reliably reach classes and student support.¹ For example, Sacramento’s RydeFreeRT youth fare-free program showed a significant increase in students using public transportation to get to school, as well as notable greater access to both afterschool and non-school activities.² HB1879, HD1 would bring these well-documented benefits to Hawai‘i’s keiki by making transit a dependable, no-cost option.

¹<https://www.its.ucla.edu/project/transport-access-to-education-and-employment/>

²https://www.sacrt.com/wp-content/uploads/RydeFreeRT_Evaluation_FINAL-1.pdf

Critically, free youth transit programs are a well-proven way to reduce dependence on cars and support broader climate goals. They have been shown to build long-term use of public transit, lessen traffic congestion and reduce emissions by taking cars off the road.³ HB1879, HD1 is a step in fulfilling Hawai'i's emission reduction commitments and responsibilities as established in the *Navahine* agreement. The Commission views this program as a much-needed direct investment in youth accessibility, with sustained long-term benefits for Hawai'i's climate goals.

For these reasons, the Hawai'i State Youth Commission is in **strong support of HB1879 HD1** and respectfully urges the Committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

The Hawai'i State Youth Commission

hawaiiistateyc@gmail.com

³https://www.sacrt.com/wp-content/uploads/RydeFreeRT_Evaluation_FINAL-1.pdf



P.O. Box 392, Kilauea, Kauai, HI, 96754

PHONE: (808) 212-4765 • FAX: (808) 828-2027 • E-MAIL: bbrody1@hawaii.rr.com • WEB SITE: www.getfitkauai.com

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)
Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 9:30 am
Testimony in Strong Support of HB1879 HD1 - Relating to Public Transit

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Human Services & Homelessness Committee,

My name is Bev Brody, and I serve as the Director of Get Fit Kaua'i, the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Coalition of Kauai County. On behalf of our coalition of more than 1,000 members, I am writing in strong support of HB1879 HD1.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is essential for Hawai'i's young people. It directly affects their ability to reach school, after-school programs, jobs, healthcare, and community activities. Yet for many families, especially in low- and moderate-income households and rural communities—transportation costs and limited school bus capacity continue to create real barriers. These challenges contribute to chronic absenteeism and lost instructional time.

A fare-free youth transit program is a practical, equitable, and forward-looking solution. By removing cost barriers, HB1879 will:

- Increase youth access to education, employment, and enrichment opportunities
- Ease pressure on school bus operations and reduce logistical challenges for families
- Support youth independence and build lifelong transit habits
- Reduce traffic congestion and vehicle miles traveled
- Advance Hawai'i's climate commitments under the Navahine Settlement by lowering transportation-related emissions

This bill not only expands opportunity for young people—it strengthens our entire transportation system and aligns with statewide goals for equity, sustainability, and community well-being. The inclusion of biannual evaluations and required reports ensures transparency and continuous improvement.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to pass HB1879 and invest in a future where every young person in Hawai'i can move safely, affordably, and reliably through their community.

Mahalo for your consideration.

BBrody

Bev Brody
Get Fit Kauai – Director
H.E.A.L. (Healthy Eating Active Living) Community Coalition of Kauai County
(808) 212-4765



HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
Chair

*John A. Burns School of Medicine,
Department of Pediatrics*

Jennifer José Lo, MD
Vice Chair

Hawai'i Health Partners

Titimaewa Ta'ase, JD
Secretary

Taase Law Office

Jonathan Ching
Kaiser Permanente

Tammy Ho
The Queen's Medical Center

Carissa Holley, MEd
Hale Makua Health Services

Joyce Lee-Ibarra, MS
JLI Consulting

Misty Pacheco, DrPH
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD
*Medical-Legal Partnership
For Children in Hawai'i*

JoAnn Tsark, MPH
*John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native
Hawaiian Research Office*

Danette Wong Tomiyasu, MBA
*Retired, Hawai'i State Department of
Health*

HIPHI Initiatives

Coalition for a
Tobacco-Free Hawai'i

Community-Based Research &
Evaluation

Community Health
Worker Initiatives

Environmental Health

Hawai'i Climate Change and Health
Working Group

Hawai'i Drug & Alcohol-Free Coalitions

Hawai'i Immunization Coalition

Hawai'i Oral Health Coalition

Hawai'i Public Health Training Hui

Healthy Eating + Active Living

Kūpuna Collective/Healthy Aging &
Community Living

Public Health Workforce Development

Date: February 12, 2026

To: Representative Lisa Marten, Chair
Representative Ikaika Olds, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

RE: Support for HB 1879, Relating To Public Transit

Hrg: February 17th, 2026 at 9:30 AM in Conference Room 329

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating + Active Living² (HEAL) Statewide Coalition **support with amendments of HB 1879**, which establishes the statewide Keiki Ride Free Program to provide fare-free public transit for youth aged 18 and under.

Suggested Amendment: Provide Free Bus Passes for All Students

While HIPHI strongly supports the intent of HB 1879, we respectfully urge the Committee to extend free student bus passes to all DOE students, rather than limiting eligibility to only those who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

Increasing Accessibility and Opportunity

Transportation is a critical factor in school attendance, academic success, and family stability. For many families, even modest transportation fees create barriers that impact students' ability to arrive at school consistently and pose a financial burden as the cost of living continues to rise. Keiki make up roughly 20% of our population, yet have limited mobility options and often depend entirely on caregivers for transportation, creating challenges in accessing education, social, and economic opportunities.

By providing free bus accessibility to all students, this bill would promote fair access, reduce absenteeism, and support the state's commitment to ensuring every child has meaningful access to public education. Fare-free transit programs nationwide have increased ridership while reducing fuel use and carbon emissions.³ For young people, free access connects them to school, after-school programs, healthcare, jobs, and community, while building lifelong transit habits.

¹ Hawai'i Public Health Institute's mission is to advance health and wellness for the people and islands of Hawai'i. We do this through expanding our understanding of what creates health of people and place, fostering partnerships, and cultivating programs to improve policies, systems, and the environments where people live, learn, work, age, and play.

² The Healthy Eating + Active Living (HEAL) Coalition, formerly known as the Obesity Prevention Task Force, was created by the legislature in 2012 and is comprised of over 60 statewide organizations. The HEAL Coalition works to make recommendations to reshape Hawai'i's school, work, community, and health care environments, making healthier lifestyles obtainable for all Hawai'i residents.

³ Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, [Freeing the Climate: Environmental Benefits of Eliminating Transit Fares](#), 2021.



Rising Costs and Limited Options on O'ahu and Kauai

On Oahu, students face limited school bus route options and increased costs. The Honolulu City Council recently passed more than a 10% increase to fares, creating an even greater barrier to transportation.⁴ We should instead be making public transit free and accessible to all.

Proven Successes on Maui and Hawai'i Island

Maui County allows free public transit for its youth already, with Hawai'i County allowing for free public transportation for the entire island. Since implementing this program ridership has more than doubled in Hawai'i County. We can follow the lead from Maui and Hawai'i Island and provide free transportation access for all of our youth.

Universal access to student transportation would:

- Remove stigma and administrative barriers tied to income-based eligibility⁵
- Ensure students from working families just above the free school lunch thresholds are not excluded,
- Increase overall attendance, retention, and educational opportunity statewide⁶
- Reduce traffic vehicle crashes, air pollution, and associated respiratory illnesses, and increase physical activity levels⁷
- Simplify implementation and reporting for the Department of Education.

Please support HB1879, which creates consistent statewide access, removes financial and administrative barriers, treats transportation as an educational support, and aligns with our climate goals at a modest cost compared to ongoing investments in vehicle infrastructure.⁸

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify and for your continued commitment to Hawai'i's keiki.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Patti Hatzistavrakis'.

Patti Hatzistavrakis
Active Transportation Specialist

⁴ Hawai'i Department of Education, "EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program," accessed January, 2026.

<https://hawaiipublicschools.org/school-services/express-county-bus-pass-program/>

⁵ Chapman, L. E., (2025). Understanding Free or Reduced-Price School Meal Stigma: A Qualitative Analysis of Parent Perspectives. The Journal of school health, 95(6), 389–399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.70004>

⁶ U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Transportation, Fact Sheet: Bolstering Daily School Attendance Through Safe, Accessible, Reliable Transportation. (2024).

<https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/2024-09/Fact-Sheet-Bolstering-Daily-School-Attendance-Through-Transportation.pdf>

⁷ CDC. (2026, January 14). Improving Health Through Transportation Advocacy Policy.

<https://www.cdc.gov/transportation/php/about/index.html>

⁸ Seitz, A., "Shifting budget priorities to expand mobility options & reduce vehicle travel," Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, December, 2024. <https://hiappleseed.org/publications/rethinking-roads>.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOMELESSNESS
Tuesday, February 17, 2026 — 9:30 a.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports HB 1879 HD1, Relating to Public Transit.

Dear Chair Marten and Members of the Committee:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports HB 1879 HD1, which establishes within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; authorizes the Department to adopt rules, expand eligibility, and consult with the Department of Education on best practices, under certain conditions; establishes a subsidized youth transit program special fund; requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund; allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit program special fund; and appropriates moneys into and out of the subsidized youth transit program special fund.

Hawai'i families face some of the highest costs of living in the nation, and transportation is a significant burden. This bill would provide meaningful financial relief to families by saving more than \$500 per child per year on O'ahu alone.¹ For families where adults already pay for bus passes, this program means traveling together at no additional cost. Currently, a family of four pays \$18 per round trip on TheBus.² The program would also open new opportunities for children to independently access schools, jobs, after-school activities, and healthcare.

Fare-free youth transit can also help alleviate pressure on Hawai'i's school bus system, which continues to face significant driver shortages and route cancellations,³ For comparison, Washington State's fare-free youth program saw 15 million rides from 1.5 million youth participants. Based on this model, Hawai'i would see a minimum of 1 million additional TheBus trips annually.⁴

¹Based on the monthly anticipated rate for youth of \$45/month

²Based on roundtrip HOLO card fares: two adults at \$3 each and two youth at \$1.50 each, multiplied by two for a roundtrip; <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2026/01/28/hawaii-news/honolulu-city-council-poised-to-ok-transit-fare-increases/>

³<https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/the-conversation/2025-09-03/school-bus-offerings-have-improved-since-last-year-but-challenges-remain>

⁴<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/news/2024/fare-free-transit-programs-boost-youth-ridership-public-transportation-statewide> and estimates provided by Hawai'i Department of Transportation.

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i

Importantly, this program represents the direct implementation of a recommendation from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation's Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan,⁵ as informed by the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council and other stakeholders. It also complements the state's investment in Safe Routes to School⁶ by addressing the full suite of transportation choices. Estimates from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation suggest the program could result in parents driving 12 million fewer vehicle miles in Hawai'i in the first year alone, equaling the same as removing more than 1,100 cars from our roads.⁷

By removing fare barriers, this bill eases financial strain on families and reduces emissions while improving transit access and independence for Hawai'i's youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Vice President of Government Affairs

⁵<https://hidot.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL-ESWRP-2025-10-15.pdf>

⁶https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2026/01/SRTSAC_Annual_Report_2026_accessible-v2.pdf

⁷Hawai'i Department of Transportation and the EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator#results>



ADDRESS
3442 Wai'ālae Ave., Suite 1
Honolulu, HI 96816

PHONE
808-735-5756

EMAIL
bicycle@hbl.org

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
Tuesday - February 17, 2026 -9:30am

**Hawai'i Bicycling League Strongly Supports HB 1879, HD1, relating to Public Transit,
and with Comments**

Aloha Chair Martin, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the Committee,

My name is Eduardo Hernandez and I am the Advocacy Director of the Hawai'i Bicycling League (HBL). We are a non-profit organization founded in 1975 with the mission of enabling more people to ride bicycles for health, recreation, and transportation. We strive to create communities across our islands that have safe, accessible, and inclusive environments for people to bike, walk, and roll.

HBL strongly supports HB 1879, HD 1, a priority measure of the legislature's Keiki Caucus. It would provide essential financial relief for families, especially low-income families who depend on public transportation; support a reduction in the State's dependence on fossil fuel, imported oil, and other imported energy resources; improve youth access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities and health and community services and; reduce the number of motor vehicles on the roads, and corresponding reductions in traffic, improved road safety, and a better quality of life for everyone.

Notably, HBL suggests HD1 be amended so that it applies universally to anyone under 18 without language referencing a means test, as noted in the Transportation Committee's report. This will reduce stigma and ensure that more people avail themselves of public transit and thereby rely less on private cars. The benefits of universal access outweigh the costs associated with implementing a means test.

Biking, walking, rolling, and using public transit are threads of a public safety net that protects everyone. By establishing a fare-free youth transit program in coordination with the counties, the state is creating practical solutions for youth and families to adopt multimodal transportation routines, and develop life-long skills for better physical and mental health. Even more, this program has potential to ease pressure on school bus operations, support youth independence, and advance the state's climate commitments under the Navahine Settlement by reducing emissions and traffic congestion.

I urge you to support this bill and help leverage the economic, health, and environmental benefits it presents so that individuals and families can not only survive, but truly thrive.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

S/Eduardo Hernandez

Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Bicycling League

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 8:31:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Susan B Roberts Emery	Green Party of Hawai'i	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and honorable members of committee,

My name is Susan RobertsEmery, as Co Chair of the the Green Party of Hawai'i, and on behalf of the GPH we offer VERY Stong Support for HB1879 HD1 . This measure will significantly increase youth transit ridership, and therefore reduce transportation costs, and overall household financial burdens on families, especially low-income families who depend on public transportation. To encourage the youth to ride public transportation while they are young will keep them as public transportation riders into their adult years. I know adults, who are afraid to ride public transportation. What ? Why? Only because they never road a bus, train etc when they were young. Let us educate the youth , reduce traffic , and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, win win! This would also implement a top priority from the youth-led 2024 Climate Future Forum, and the goals of the inaugural Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council. Thank you to the youth for stepping forward. We need your wisdom, the Green Party of Hawai'i.

Please support HB1879 HD1

Susan RobertsEmery

Green Party of Hawai'i

Paauilo



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

February 17, 2026 at 9:30AM

Conference Room 329

HB1879 HD1

Relating to Public Transit

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB1879 HD1**, which would establish and appropriate funds for the Department of Transportation to create a statewide Subsidized Youth Transit Program, benefiting all residents 18 and under.

This bill aligns with our goal of providing an equitable and affordable transportation system while also striving for a more sustainable future. Providing children the opportunity to ride transit fare-free can offer financial relief for families while also fostering opportunities for growth and independence in youth. On Oahu, households [spend nearly 50% of their income on housing and transportation costs](#). Transportation costs alone can reach thousands of dollars each year when fuel, maintenance, and other expenses are factored in. Thus, offering youth the option to ride public transit for free through a subsidized program could result in significant savings for households while allowing youth further autonomy to access extracurriculars, internships, and recreational activities with friends and loved ones.

While we acknowledge amendments to the bill that would prioritize providing subsidized county transit services to youth who demonstrate financial or social need to assist Hawaii's most vulnerable populations, we believe that, ultimately, offering this program to all children would provide greater opportunities for success. As all youth are considered vulnerable road users, it is preferable to provide equal opportunities for children to travel safely and have access to academic and social activities while dismantling the barrier to using Hawaii's public transportation systems.

Free or subsidized fares for youth can further increase the use of public transit, strengthening local economies and reducing congestion while advancing the state's goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Increased transit use also brings health

and safety benefits as transit riders walk more, emit less carbon, and experience fewer traffic-related injuries.

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 and efficient transportation system to serve the mobility needs of people and freight (including walkways, bicycles, and transit), fosters economic growth and development, and takes into consideration resiliency needs, while minimizing fuel consumption and air pollution ([23 CFR 450.300](#)).

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 1:15:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
laurel brier	Kauai Climate Action Coalition	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Public transport is an excellent way to lower air pollution and address congested highways, by reducing the number of vehicles on the road. Let the children lead the way. As youth get familiar with using public transport - the convenience, the ease, and contributing to the greater good of the community, they are more likely to be lifetime users and introduce other family members to this important public resource. This action is in direct alignment with the Navahine ageement to reduce greenhouse gases from our transportation system. Strong support for HB1879.



Testimony in Support of HB1879 HD1 HD1
Hearing on February 17, 2026 at 9:30am in Room 329
House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Doorae Shin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Our Children's Trust in strong support of HB1879 HD1, which establishes free transit for youth in Hawai'i.

HB1879 HD1 addresses a critical and growing challenge facing youth and families across our state: the high and rising cost of transportation. Transportation is one of the largest household expenses in Hawai'i, and for many families, transit fares create a real barrier to accessing school, jobs, healthcare, extracurricular activities, and community resources. By making public transit free for youth, this bill provides immediate and meaningful relief to families while expanding mobility, independence, and opportunity for keiki across Hawai'i.

Free youth transit also promotes equity and access. Youth from lower-income households, rural communities, and families without reliable access to a private vehicle are disproportionately impacted by transportation costs. This bill helps ensure that a young person's ability to participate fully in education and community life is not determined by their family's income or zip code. By strengthening and simplifying existing county youth transit programs, HB1879 HD1 creates a more consistent and accessible system statewide.

In addition to affordability and equity benefits, HB1879 HD1 advances Hawai'i's climate and public health goals. Encouraging youth to use public transit from an early age reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, lowers transportation-related emissions, and supports long-term mode shift toward cleaner, more sustainable transportation. Increased transit ridership also improves air quality, which is especially important for protecting the health of keiki and other vulnerable populations.

HB1879 HD1 is directly aligned with Hawai'i's legal and policy obligations to reduce transportation emissions. In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires HDOT to "take any actions necessary" to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means to protect children's constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and to preserve Hawai'i's public trust resources for present and future generations. In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. Expanding access to public transit, especially for youth, is a practical and necessary step toward meeting these obligations. This bill is a concrete and necessary step toward fulfilling these obligations.

HB1879 HD1 represents a pragmatic and equitable investment in Hawai'i's keiki and future. It strengthens and simplifies existing County youth transit programs, reduces household transportation costs, and advances the state's climate, energy security, and public health goals. By expanding access to public transit to those who need it most, this bill ensures that the benefits of clean and public transportation are shared broadly and fairly across Hawai'i.

For these reasons, Our Children's Trust strongly urges your support for HB1879 HD1. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your leadership on this critical issue.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doorae Shin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doorae" being more prominent than the last name "Shin".

Doorae Shin
Our Children's Trust
Honolulu, Hawai'i



To: The House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:30am

In strong support of HB1879 HD1

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and HSH Committee members;

I am Co-Founder of the Hawai'i chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HB1879 HD1** that would establish within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties.

In 2024, the Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT) reached an unprecedented settlement in *Navahine v. HDOT*, with a commitment to protect children's constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and to preserve Hawai'i's public trust resources for present and future generations. The settlement requires HDOT to develop and support strategies that reduce carbon pollution, including expanding and improving public transit. This measure represents a common-sense solution that directly addresses this mandate.

HB1879 HDS1, also known as the Keiki Ride Free bill, would make transit more equitable and accessible by providing free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai'i. To increase safety and accessibility, the program would also offer free transit fares for one adult accompanying a child age 12 and under.

Transportation expenses place a heavy strain on family budgets —especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Offering a fare-free youth transit program would not only significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide, it would also reduce household transportation costs, lightening the financial burden on families.

Removing fare barriers with the Keiki Ride Free program would make getting to school easier, as well as enabling participation in after-school activities. The increase in ridership among younger age groups is especially important, as research shows that if they use public transit from a young age, they are more likely to become life-long transit users.

This Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, switching to public transit is one of the most impactful personal changes for individuals to take to lower their carbon emissions. And shifting trips from

private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit not only lowers emissions, it reduces traffic, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways. Importantly, HB1879 HD1 allows our keiki to be part of the solution.

To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like HB1879 HD1. We urge you to PASS this important legislation and let keiki ride free.

Last, we wish to share the words of a young climate activist who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Greta Thunberg.

“Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope, but I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sherry Pollack

Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:24:27 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Mulinix	Greenpeace Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair & HSH Committee,

My name is Dave Mulinix, CoFounder & Hawaii State Representative for Greenpeace Hawaii. On behalf of our thousands member and supporters statewide we Stand In Strong Support of HB1879 that Establishes within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Authorizes the Department to adopt rules, expand eligibility, and consult with the Department of Education on best practices, under certain conditions. Establishes the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund. Allocates funds from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Appropriates funds into and out of the subsidized youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

This bill has many positive aspects not only does it provide an experience that will teach our youth that riding public transport can just as easily get them to their destination as driving an individual car. It will help to take thousands of vehicles off our roads, reducing traffic congestion and most importantly cut Hawaii's greenhouse gas emissions to help us reach our zero emission transportation system goals.

As the Hawaii State Legislature noted in 2021 that we are already in a growing Climate Emergency. We are already experiencing the effects of the growing Climate Crisis here in Hawaii with receding shorelines, homes on the north shore of Oahu falling in the ocean, our extended drought conditions, and the global warming caused fire that obliterated Lahina. This is just the beginning of the devastation we are facing if we don't make a concerted effort to get off of fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

HB1879 is an excellent step in the right direction to help Hawaii cut its CO2 emissions and it helps to fulfill the agreement reached in the Navahive vs HDOT settlement.

Mahalo,

Dave Mulinix

CoFoundser & Hawaii State Representative

Greenpeace Hawaii



HOUSE BILL 1879, HD1, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

FEBRUARY 17, 2026 · HSH HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 1879, HD1, relating to public transit, which establishes within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; authorizes the Department to adopt rules, expand eligibility, and consult with the Department of Education on best practices, under certain conditions; establishes the subsidized youth transit program special fund; requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund; allocates funds from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the subsidized youth transit program special fund; and appropriates funds into and out of the subsidized youth transit program special fund.

This initiative will help address chronic absenteeism among our keiki, reduce financial burdens on local families, and expand economic opportunities, especially for low-income households across our islands. According to the Hawai'i State Department of Education's Strive HI Performance System, chronic absenteeism remains a persistent challenge in our public schools. In the most recent report, about 25 percent of Hawai'i public school students were chronically absent, meaning they missed 15 or more days of school during the academic year. These attendance indicators are far below what educators consider optimal for student success and reflect the ongoing challenges families face in getting students to school consistently.

Missing school has real consequences: students who are not in their classrooms are less likely to succeed academically, more likely to fall behind on foundational skills, and more likely to disengage from school over time. One key barrier that many families report is transportation insecurity. When reliable and affordable transportation to school is not available, students may be marked absent even if they intend to attend, deepening attendance gaps that correlate strongly with long-term educational outcomes.

HB 1879's fare-free youth transit program would eliminate the financial barrier to accessing public transportation for children and teens, helping families ensure their keiki can get to school every day. Reliable transit is especially important in Hawai'i, where traditional school bus services do not reach every communities, leaving many households depend on TheBus and related services to commute. Moreover, the state's ongoing school bus driver shortage worsens transportation inequity for rural and underserved areas, increasing the urgency of public transit accessibility.

The problem of transportation cost barriers is not hypothetical. Last month, the Honolulu City Council voted to increase public transit fares in a package of changes expected to generate about \$4 million a year for TheBus, TheHandi-Van, and Skyline services. Under the new rates, monthly adult passes rise from \$80 to \$90, youth monthly passes rise from \$40 to \$45, and annual youth passes rise to \$495, while cash single-ride fares will cost riders more and the free transfer window will shrink. Community advocates have emphasized that these increases place a financial burden on working families, kūpuna, students, and people with disabilities, particularly as more than half of TheBus riders do not have a car at home and many households earn under \$50,000 per year.

In this context, fare increases come at a time when families are already stretched by Hawai'i's high cost of living and rising housing costs. Even modest increases in transit costs can force households to choose between transportation and other essentials such as food, rent, or medical care, choices that disproportionately affect low-income families and can contribute to school absenteeism if students cannot reliably get to campus.

Public transit in Honolulu—and transit systems nationwide—relies heavily on subsidies because fare revenues cover only a small portion of operating costs. Federal transit programs allow federal shares of up to 85 percent of capital costs for clean or low-emission buses and bus facilities,

demonstrating the degree to which federal investment supports local transit systems and reduces cost burdens for communities. According to Honolulu Department of Transit officials, fares cover roughly 10 percent of public transportation costs, or roughly \$45 million of a nearly \$470 million public transportation budget. Given the economic and psychological benefits that this measure provides for keiki health and wellness, its price tag—which should be roughly \$5 million—makes this an investment we cannot afford to miss.

This proposal aligns with these principles by leveraging public investment to remove point-of-service barriers for youth. Making transit fare-free for children and teens not only supports regular school attendance, but also advances economic wellness. When families do not have to pay per ride for their children’s transit, they retain more household income for necessities, increasing economic stability and reducing stress. Youth fare-free transit expands access to after-school programs, tutoring, library resources, and part-time work opportunities, helping young people engage fully in educational and community life.

Moreover, fare-free youth transit supports broader workforce participation among parents and caregivers. Secure, affordable transportation enables adults to reliably commute to employment, engage in job training, or attend work without worrying about unexpected transit costs for their children. This kind of support is especially meaningful for low-income families who may work irregular hours or multiple jobs to make ends meet.

This measure represents a thoughtful, evidence-based policy that addresses the root causes of chronic absenteeism and enhances economic mobility for working families. By removing a cost barrier and ensuring equitable access to transportation, this measure uplifts students’ educational outcomes and supports financial security for our most vulnerable residents.

Contact: educationcaucusdph@gmail.com · 808-679-7454



HAWAII YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

HYTC Testimony for the House Committee on
HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS
HB 1879 | [date], 2026

IN STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. Keiki Ride Free is a bill we are deeply passionate about as a council. Keiki Ride Free is supposed to make Hawai'i **more affordable**, enable youth to move freely outside school hours, **enable homeless youth to attend school**, enable **flexible emergency management plans**, and so much more. This is in peril due to the HD 1

In our first year as a council, the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council has sought to incorporate youth voices, affordability, the state climate targets, and strategies from HDOT's Energy Security and Waste Reduction proposal into our advocacy. **Keiki Ride Free is the culmination of that work**, with the support of our Hawai'i Department of Transportation advisors and countless meetings, phone calls, and outreach events with Earth Justice, HiPHI, Hawai'i Apple Seed, and Our Children's Trust. Most importantly, this bill is nothing without the **monumental support of the countless youth organizations and individuals** who see its promise and have worked tirelessly to help us advocate for it; **many of whom you may hear from at the hearing.**

Keiki Ride Free enhances opportunities for youth, most importantly outside of school hours, regardless of where they live, by giving them access to jobs, community events, reliable transportation, and the ability to advocate and participate in government. This bill **eliminates barriers in the Hawai'i Department of Education Express and current county youth programs** by eliminating minimum and maximum distance requirements, giving students a choice of school, and making it **easier than ever for Keiki to use the bus.**

Enabling our lowest-income families to access affordable transportation is extremely important and timely. However, it is also important to enable families directly above the poverty line to access the same resources. Oftentimes, families directly above the poverty line experience the same struggles as low-income families, but because of marginally higher incomes, or because of where they reside, they are not able to access the necessary resources to survive Hawai'i's high cost of living.

Along with the above points, the HYTC would like to note that state-wide fare-free transit, not limited to certain counties, is important because of the fact that Maui and Hawai'i Counties already have fare-free transit and are at risk of losing it due to federal grant cuts and budgetary constraints. Hawai'i County is now having to dig into its budget to pay for free transit services, **cutting many fixed bus routes across the island** and making it **more difficult for youth to achieve independence**. Maui County has already been using the county budget to pay for youth fare-free service since 2024, but with this investment in youth, they are having to choose between **investing in new sidewalks or transit infrastructure and youth fares**.

Honolulu City and County and Kauai County are not fare-free but do offer reduced fares. However, the programs they do offer are often **difficult for families to access**, requiring trips to transit centers during working hours on weekdays and the need to bring proof of identity, **leaving many hardworking and homeless families unable to access them**.

Because of this, the HYTC recommends the following amendments to streamline the administrative burden and ensure equitable access for youth from low-income and homeless communities, while continuing to provide resources to all:

Clarifying amendments:

Add to the Definitions section: "Youth Accompanying Aide" means a person assisting a disabled youth.

Amend the definition of "Guardian". "Guardian" means a parent, legal guardian, or other adult responsible for accompanying ~~an elementary-age~~ a sixth-grade or younger child.

Amend the definition of "Youth". "Youth" means an individual from birth to ~~young adulthood~~, Senior Year of High School, and may include individuals eighteen years of age or older.

Broaden categories:

§ -2 Program; established. (a) There is established within the department a subsidized youth transit program. The program shall, in coordination with the counties, prioritize providing subsidized county transit services to youth who demonstrate financial or social need; provided that financial or social need shall include youth:

(1) Who attend schools that receive Title I funding; or

(2) Who attend a HIDOE public school.

(b) In addition to providing subsidized county transit services to youth in (2)(a), the department may also prioritize providing subsidized county transit services to youth:

- (1) From households receiving public assistance;
- (2) Residing in public or subsidized housing;
- (3) In foster care or guardianship arrangements;
- (4) Who qualify for free or reduced-price school meals under the National School Lunch Program;
- ~~(5) Who attend public schools that receive Title I funding; and~~
- (5)(6) From single-parent households within an income threshold tied to the federal poverty level, as adjusted for Hawai'i; and
- (6) With disabilities.

[The following sections would therefore need to be renumbered appropriately.]

Allow guardians:

The HYTC requests that, should sufficient funds be available to first provide free fare for all children, the HDOT be authorized to provide fare-free transit to: “Guardians accompanying elementary-age (through sixth grade) or younger children; provided that no more than one guardian may receive a free fare for each elementary- age or younger child for any ride.”

The HYTC also requests that, should sufficient funds be available to provide free fare for youth with disabilities, the HDOT be authorized to provide fare-free transit to: “Youth Accompanying Aides accompanying a youth with disabilities; provided that no more than one Youth Accompanying Aide may receive a free fare for each youth with disabilities for any ride.” The HYTC finds that the population of youth with disabilities is approximately 3% in Hawai'i, and therefore, the impacts on funding would be negligible at best.

Again, Mahalo for the chance to testify. On behalf of the HYTC and the Hawai'i youth unable to attend today's hearing because of conflicting school hours, or lack of transit availability and affordability, we ask you to adopt the above amendments and pass HB 1879.

Mahalo,

Mia Nishiguchi

Mia Nishiguchi
Council Chair
O'ahu Honolulu Representative

Luke Gee

Luke Gee
Council Vice-Chair
West Side Hawai'i Representative

Moss Kuon

Moss Kuon
Press Secretary
Central Maui Representative

Derek Takeno

Derek Takeno
Outreach Chair
Central Maui Representative

Luca Zev Cuniberti

Luca Zev Cuniberti
Policy and Legislation Chair
O'ahu North Shore Representative

Connor Ulene

Connor Ulene
Policy and Legislation Vice Chair
Central Maui Representative





REPRESENTATIVE LISA MARTEN, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE IKAIKA OLDS, VICE CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & HOMELESSNESS

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1879, HD1

Tuesday, February 17, 2026, 9:30 a.m.
Conference Room 329 & Videoconference
State Capitol
415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

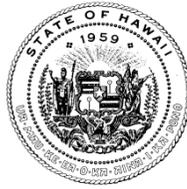
Earthjustice strongly **supports House Bill 1879**, the Keiki Ride Free. This bill provides for all children ages 0-18 free transit fares statewide.

Earthjustice is Hawai‘i’s premier public interest environmental law firm, specializing in upholding the public trust doctrine. In 2022, our firm together with Our Children’s Trust, represented thirteen youth plaintiffs that filed *Navahine v. Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, which resulted in a court-enforced settlement that commits HDOT to achieving Hawai‘i’s zero emissions goals by 2045. The settlement is rooted in protecting children’s constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and to preserve Hawai‘i’s public trust resources for present and future generations.

Transportation expenses are a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i’s working families, especially low-income households that either rely on public transit or require personal transportation at great expense. Keiki Ride Free would reduce transit costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties. It would also significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more.

This bill would facilitate many critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits, as outlined in HDOT’s recent Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan. And since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—all while helping cultivate healthy transit habits in Hawai‘i’s upcoming generations

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.



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

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, 329

HB1879, HD1
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness

The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports House Bill 1879, HD 1 which would establish a subsidized youth transit program for youth statewide, removing cost barriers to public transit use for youth who demonstrate financial or social need, and allowing DOT to provide free transit to all of Hawaii's keiki from birth through senior year in high school should sufficient funds be available.

The DOT suggests one amendment to increase bus safety for youth through elementary school and clarifies the need for partnership with the Department of Education.

While the focus of this Keiki Ride Free bill is to reduce household transportation costs for youth experiencing financial or social needs, this proposal has strong added benefits of reducing traffic congestion, reducing emissions, improving youth health, empowering youth independence and access, and ensuring transportation access during emergencies.

The DOT recognizes the important role that accessible and affordable public transit plays in achieving the State's energy security and decarbonization goals. The DOT's Hawaii Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, published in October 2025, explains how the transportation sector must implement a range of strategies to meet statewide greenhouse gas reduction targets established in state law (Sections 225P-5 and 225P-8, Hawaii Revised Statutes). The Plan promotes "low-carbon alternatives to vehicle travel" and emphasizes the importance of incorporating stakeholder input, including that of Hawaii's youth, in implementing transportation decarbonization strategies (Plan p. 2). House Bill 1879 is being championed by Hawaii Youth Transportation Council with the support of other youth councils and individual keiki from all islands. The DOT is proud to support their efforts. This proposal is also forward thinking - by encouraging youth to use public transit from an early age, we are fostering habits that can lead to lifelong use of sustainable transportation options.

The Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan specifically identifies fare-free youth

transit as a recommended legislative strategy. Strategy HWY-M-11 in the Plan calls to “enact legislation that provides a funding mechanism ... to incentivize counties to provide free public bus access to youth and improve safety for youth on buses,” noting that this approach would remove transportation barriers for youth, particularly those from low-income or underserved communities, while reducing single-rider vehicle use and therefore traffic (Plan p. 65). The Plan also emphasizes that such programs must be supported by a sustainable funding source to avoid financial strain on local transit agencies. This proposal seeks to allocate a portion of existing environmental response, energy, and food security tax (aka Barrel Tax) revenues, which is an appropriate funding source as this proposal would directly lead to reduced emissions from gasoline. The allocation of existing Barrel Tax revenues would provide a sustainable funding source without increasing costs for residents.

The DOT has met with all county transit agencies regarding this proposal. All expressed support for a cohesive statewide youth transit program, and willingness to coordinate its implementation should this measure pass with adequate funding.

The DOT requests that should sufficient funds be available to first provide free fare for all children, the DOT be authorized to provide fare-free transit to:
“Guardians accompanying elementary-age (through sixth grade) or younger children; provided that no more than one guardian may receive a free fare for each elementary-age or younger child for any ride.”

Partnership with the Department of Education (DOE), and with the Department of Human Services would be critical to coordinate logistics through the DOE schools such as distribution of HOLO cards to specific segments of the student population experiencing financial or social need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill.



Testimony in Support for HB1879 - Relating to Public Transit
Committee on Human Services & Homelessness (HSH)
Tuesday, February 17th, 2026 at 9:30AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and members of the HSH committee,
Mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of HB1879**, which would establish a two-year “Keiki Ride Free” Pilot Program to provide year-round, fare-free public transit access for those aged 18 and under in Hawai‘i. We also offer suggested amendments for the committee’s consideration.

Public transit is more than a way to get from place to place—it’s a tool for growth, opportunity and community connection. Transit is particularly important for young people, the largest demographic of residents who do not drive. While roughly 20 percent of Hawai‘i residents are under the age of 18, their mobility options are limited. This often requires keiki to rely on their parents or caregivers to transport them, which can be time consuming, stressful, and costly for families.

When young people can move freely, they gain confidence, independence, and access to the full range of opportunities the islands offer. Transit connects keiki to after-school programs, internships, health care, recreation and friends, while also building lifelong public transit habits.

One of the most effective ways to improve people’s mobility, especially for keiki, is to provide free access to public transit. Local and national fare-free transit programs have been shown to produce several social, economic, and environmental benefits, including:

- Significant increases in overall transit ridership;
- Boosted local economic activity; and
- Reduced fuel consumption and carbon emissions.¹

There is a patchwork of reduced-fare and limited fare-free programs currently available in Hawai‘i. For example, the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program provides free rides for some intermediate and highschool students—but only during the school year, only for those who attend their home schools (no-Geographical Exemptions), and only if they live at least 1.5 miles away.² This program has served thousands of students. However, thousands of keiki are still left out: elementary-aged children, students attending private or charter schools, those living closer to school, and those needing transportation in the summer months.

¹ Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, “Freeing the Climate: Environmental Benefits of Eliminating Transit Fares,” 2021.

<https://massbudget.org/2021/03/24/freeing-the-climate-environmental-benefits-of-eliminating-transit-fares/>.

² Hawai‘i Department of Education, “EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program,” accessed January, 2026.

<https://hawaiipublicschools.org/school-services/express-county-bus-pass-program/>

Meanwhile, youth in Maui County can already ride for free on fixed routes, and Hawai'i County's Hele-On system has been completely fare-free since 2022. O'ahu and Kaua'i youth still pay to ride, however. That's despite Honolulu's transit fares being raised twice over the last five years, and most recently, in January, 2025 the Honolulu City Council voted to pass Bill 54, which will once again increase transit fares.³ Under Bill 54, youth monthly and annual passes will increase by 12.5 percent, costing nearly \$500 per year.⁴

These inconsistencies create inequity: a keiki's ability to use transit freely depends largely on where they live, the type of school they attend, and their family's income. A statewide program – like that being proposed under HB1879 – would create consistent access for youth, reduce administrative burden, and ensure that county transit agencies are financially supported as they expand youth ridership.

While the fiscal investment needed to support this program may seem large to some, it is miniscule compared to the state's investment in infrastructure that supports vehicle travel. Based on Hawai'i Appleseed's 2024 analysis, Hawai'i Department of Transportation's (HDOT) capital improvement program (CIP) budget averaged about \$700 million over the past decade.⁵ Between fiscal year (FY) 2019 and FY2024, 66.3 percent of HDOT's CIP budget went toward projects that expanded vehicle capacity, while only 1.5 percent was directed toward pedestrian, bicycling, and transit infrastructure.⁶

This spending imbalance has led to a transportation system that exacerbates the very problems it aims to solve—higher emissions, more traffic, and unmet needs for those relying on non-automotive forms of transportation. More specifically, this hinders the state's ability to meet net-zero emissions by 2045, as mandated under HRS §225P-5. Under the Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, created as an outcome of the *Navahine* agreement, HDOT committed to enacting legislation to provide public bus access to youth.

Suggested Amendments

While we strongly support HB1879, we respectfully request amendments to clarify legislative intent and ensure that the Keiki Ride Free Pilot Program is implemented as a universal, fare-free program for all youth aged 18 and under, without means testing. To do this, we recommend:

- **Removing language that directs HDOT to prioritize participation by children from specific populations**, including households receiving public assistance, qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch, or meeting other income-based criteria. While well-intentioned, this language introduces ambiguity and implies that eligibility may be limited or conditioned on income verification. Based on the bill's current funding mechanism, there appears to be

³ Honolulu City Council, Bill 54 (CD1): Relating to Public Transit, 2025.

<https://hnlldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnlldoc/document-download?id=25846>.

⁴ Honolulu City Council, "Bill 54: Relating to Public Transit," Introduced July 22, 2025.

<https://hnlldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnlldoc/measure/3424>

⁵ Seitz, A., "Shifting budget priorities to expand mobility options & reduce vehicle travel," Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, December, 2024. <https://hiappleseed.org/publications/rethinking-roads>.

⁶ Ibid.

sufficient funding to support universal participation by all youth statewide. Means testing is therefore unnecessary and inconsistent with the goal of equitable, barrier-free access.

- **Striking or clarifying the provision stating that “nothing shall prohibit the department from expanding eligibility to all youth if sufficient funding is available.”** This language creates confusion by suggesting that universal eligibility is not the baseline intent of the program. If the Legislature’s goal is to provide fare-free transit to all youth, that intent should be clearly stated in statute.
- **Explicitly stating that eligibility for the program shall be universal for all individuals aged 18 and under in Hawai‘i,** without income verification or documentation requirements beyond proof of age. Means testing would require the collection and administration of sensitive personal and household financial information, creating unnecessary administrative burdens for HDOT and county transit agencies. Resources that would otherwise be spent on eligibility screening and compliance should instead be directed toward service delivery and program implementation.

In summary, Keiki Ride Free is a practical, evidence-based policy that will improve access to education, reduce household transportation costs, and advance the State’s climate commitments. The most effective way to ensure that youth who most need free transit are able to access it is to **make the program simple, universal, and stigma-free**. Universal programs increase participation, reduce administrative costs, protect privacy, and ensure that no keiki fall through the cracks due to paperwork barriers or technical eligibility rules.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Abbey Seitz
Director of Transportation Equity
Hawai‘i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice



Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

To: House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
Re: **HB1879 HD1 – Relating to Public Transit**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 17, 2026; 9:30 AM

Dear Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1879 HD1**, which would establish within the Department of Transportation a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties, as well as establish the subsidized youth transit program special fund to which moneys would be allocated from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

Reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation is essential for young people to reach school, jobs, and training and extracurricular programs across the state. However, high transit costs and limited school bus routes pose significant challenges for many families. These obstacles fall most heavily on low- and moderate-income households and rural communities, leading to higher rates of absenteeism and lost learning time and opportunities.

Public transit plays a vital role for youth, who make up the largest group of residents who do not drive. It provides a pathway to educational and career opportunities, personal growth, and community connection. When young people are able to travel freely, they build confidence and independence while gaining access to the full range of enrichment activities across our counties.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 4:15:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Waters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Writing in strong support. Mahalo.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/12/2026 4:55:47 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan Huynh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha. I support this bill because it encourages our youth to be more active, experience public transit, and to lean away from car dependency. Free transit for the youth will also improve safety, reduce traffic congestion, and save their families time and money. Mahalo.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 11:59:52 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee,

I am testifying in strong support of HB1879, the Keiki Ride Free bill. This legislation is not merely a fare reduction; it is a promise kept, a climate action, and a lifeline for working families all at once.

This bill fulfills a commitment rooted in the historic **Navahine lawsuit settlement**, which affirmed our keiki's constitutional right to a healthy climate. Getting more people onto public transit is the single most effective way to reduce transportation emissions. Every student who rides the bus instead of being driven represents fewer cars on the road, less pollution in our air, and lower carbon emissions.

Eliminating youth fares is a direct, actionable step toward achieving zero emissions by 2045. It turns the HDOT Energy Security Plan from a document into reality by putting our largest emissions sector—transportation—on a cleaner, more sustainable path. The compounding benefits—reduced traffic congestion, cleaner air for our communities, and a more resilient, well-utilized transit system—benefit every single resident of Hawai‘i.

HB1879 also recognizes the daily economic pressures crushing Hawai‘i's families. By eliminating transit fares for youth, we ease household budgets and ensure that every child—regardless of their family's income—can reliably get to school, extracurricular activities, medical appointments, and jobs. This is how we build a more equitable and connected community, where opportunity is not contingent on the ability to afford a bus ride.

This bill is good for our climate, good for families, and good for our collective future. I urge you to pass HB1879 and make Keiki Ride Free the law of the land.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 5:40:11 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nora Pollard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am submitting testimony in strong support of this bill for free bus transit for keiki. As a public high school teacher, I have many students to rely on the bus to get to school every day. The benefits of this bill are that our students will be able to have quicker, more autonomous transit to and from school and around the islands they call home, and their families will be getting a stimulus by not having to pay for their bus passes. In the case of larger families, the benefit would be even greater. Please support our keiki and their families!

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 6:02:27 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Doris Segal Matsunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1879 HD1

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 7:21:50 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elizabeth Ann K Poire	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness,

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo for your time,

Elizabeth Poire
Kailua Kona, Hawaii

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 12:37:55 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lauren Pokipala	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

I support HB1879 because this will help students get to school, work, or simply enjoy exploring different parts of the island without worrying about how much it will cost them or their families. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better environment for us all. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo!

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:41:16 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Inam Rahman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT WITH TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS

HB1879 HD1 – Relating to Public Transit

House Committee on Human Services (HSH)

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

Aloha and mahalo for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB1879 HD1.

This measure thoughtfully establishes a subsidized youth transit program within the Department of Transportation, coordinated with the counties, and aligns transportation equity with Hawai‘i’s environmental and emissions-reduction goals. HD1 significantly improves the bill by prioritizing youth demonstrating financial or social need, establishing a dedicated funding stream, and requiring biannual reporting and program evaluation.

As a physician serving Hawai‘i’s families, I see how transportation barriers affect school attendance, access to health services, after-school participation, and workforce entry. Reliable transit access improves educational continuity, reduces household financial strain, and promotes independence for youth—particularly those in foster care, single-parent households, or public housing. The prioritization language in Section 2(a) appropriately ensures that limited funds first benefit those most in need.

The allocation of approximately \$9.87 million annually from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax provides a defined funding source that is consistent with the State’s climate and transportation decarbonization mandates. Increasing youth transit ridership directly supports emissions reduction targets under Chapter 225P, HRS.

To further strengthen the measure's long-term fiscal sustainability and accountability, I respectfully suggest the following technical amendments:

1. **Expenditure Limitation Language**
Clarify that annual expenditures from the special fund shall not exceed actual deposits and available balances within the fund for that fiscal year, preventing structural deficits.
2. **Administrative Cost Cap**
Establish a reasonable ceiling (for example, not more than 10% of annual expenditures) for administrative and evaluation costs to ensure that the majority of funds directly support youth transit access.
3. **Five-Year Sunset or Legislative Review Clause**
Include a provision requiring legislative reauthorization after five years, based on documented performance metrics, fiscal sustainability, and environmental impact data.
4. **Independent Fiscal Review**
Require periodic review by the State Auditor or inclusion within the annual financial audit cycle to ensure transparent accounting and efficient fund utilization.

HD1 already includes strong reporting requirements under Sections 3 and 4. Adding the safeguards above would provide additional fiscal discipline while preserving the bill's core purpose.

With prudent oversight, this program can:

- Reduce financial burdens on working families
- Improve access to education and employment pathways
- Increase transportation equity in rural and disadvantaged communities
- Support Hawai'i's legally mandated climate and energy goals

HB1879 HD1 represents a balanced investment in youth mobility, environmental stewardship, and long-term economic resilience. I respectfully urge passage with the suggested technical amendments to ensure fiscal responsibility and program durability.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Inam U. Rahman, MD

Honolulu, Hawai'i

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 8:20:48 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Marten and Vice-Chair Olds,

I am writing in strong support of the Keiki Ride Free measure as a powerful engine of equity, education, and sustainability statewide. As an educator, I have seen firsthand how access to transportation can be a crucial barrier to education and opportunity for Hawaii's keiki.

Encouraging public transport also teaches our youth to make sustainable choices for our state and planet, helping us achieve our ambitious statewide goals of carbon neutrality. Please give your full support to our children and this important measure.

Sincerely yours,

David Ball

Waialae-Kahala

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 8:48:16 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andrea Nandoskar	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Strongly support!!!

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 9:10:05 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lisa Galloway	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Kids need to get to school!

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 10:34:37 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 10:44:44 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dale Jensen	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear HSH committee members:

I am a Hawaii resident concerned about our state's response to the climate crisis currently being refuted by our Federal Administration. Therefore, state actions are critical to keep moving forward for future generations.

HB1879 HD1 addresses the need for increased use of public transportation to save on greenhouse gas emissions and helps local families relieve the high financial burden associated with transportation costs. The Subsidized Youth Transit Program, also known as "Keiki Ride Free," would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties.

HB1879 HD1 would significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more. By doing so, this bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Since transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

I urge your active support and passage of this important bill.

Sincerely,

Dale Jensen, Kailua, Oahu

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 1:05:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I believe this is a good idea, here's why: Relieve financial burden on families----> Less stress at home----> More love and attention for children----> Children do better academically----> Children grow up to be productive citizens----> less crime-----> Government saves money----> lower taxes or more societal improvements---->You get reelected.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 3:29:09 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
B.A. McClintock	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Transportation costs place a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. The Subsidized Youth Transit Program, also known as "Keiki Ride Free," would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties.

--HB1879 HD1 would significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more. By doing so, this bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies. Mahalo.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 4:23:02 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johanna Tokunaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

- Enabling all people under 18 to access free transit will develop skills for independent living
- Reduces transportation costs for families
- Aligns with the solutions and priorities of the court-mandated Navahine Settlement

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 4:23:14 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JONATHAN LOTT	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

I used to be a public school teacher and some of my students were riders of TheBus every day. Attitudes toward driving cars versus taking transit, walking, or cycling tend to be formed during the school-age years. I believe this bill will help change negative attitudes and create more favorable attitudes toward non-motor vehicle modes of transportation.

Jon Lott--car-free pedestrian and cyclist, Waikiki

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 5:24:06 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kathryn Braun	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am a long-time educator in the Hawaii school system, and I'm concerned about the increasingly hard lives of our keiki during these tumultuous times.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Aloha - Kathryn Braun, Punchbowl

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:27:04 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zane Dalgamouni	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha e ka Luna Ho‘omaluku, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omaluku, a me nā lālā o ke komite.

My name is Zane Dalgamouni. I’m a freshman in high school, and I live in Mānoa. I’m testifying in support of House Bill 1879.

I believe that providing fare-free public transit for all youth would have significant, long-term benefits for our state. When young people are able to use public transportation easily and affordably, they’re much more likely to use it regularly. That builds independence at a young age, and those habits tend to stick with people as they grow older.

Over time, that means fewer cars on the road, lower traffic, and reduced emissions. It also makes it easier for students to get to school, jobs, sports, and other activities without always relying on their parents to ferry them around.

Another important benefit of making youth transit fare-free for everyone is that it broadens who uses public transportation. When transit is used by families across all income levels, it tends to receive more public attention and advocacy for reliability, safety, and service quality. That ultimately improves the system for all riders.

This programme is also very cost-efficient. It’s funded through taxes that are already in place on gasoline, and the impact works out to less than one cent per gallon. For families, the benefit is meaningful, while the cost to drivers is minimal.

In the long term, increased transit use can improve public health by reducing air pollution, lowering infrastructure costs, and helping Hawai‘i meet its climate goals.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of House Bill 1879. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:28:24 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sven Sorge	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Sirs and Madams,

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families.

I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come.

I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Thank you very much for your urgent help!

Sincerely,

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 7:51:45 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/14/2026 8:36:10 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members!

Transportation costs place a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. The Subsidized Youth Transit Program, also known as "Keiki Ride Free," would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties.

HB1879 HD1 would significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more. By doing so, this bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Mahalo!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:10:38 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John Rogers	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

I support HB1879 HD1 which would establish within the HDOT a subsidized youth transit program, to be coordinated by the counties. This will mitigate school bus driver shortages, reduce family transportation costs, and improve access to education. This Bill would achieve more of the legislatures goals if it included any student through graduate school.

Best Regards,

John Rogers Ewa NB #23 Transportation Committee Co-chair

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 10:28:29 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Diane Ware	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify. I strongly support this measure to increase youth use of public transportation and benefit our climate and traffic congestion especially around schools.

Diane Ware Volcano HI 96785-0698

SUPPORT FOR HB 1879 HD 1

House Committee on Human Services & Homelessness
HB 1879 HD 1 Hearing on Feb. 17, 2026 a 9:30 am
Conference Room 329 and videoconference

My name is John Kawamoto, and I support HB 1879 HD 1 because it represents a step toward achieving Hawaii's goal of net negative emissions by 2045, and does so in an equitable manner.

The transportation sector represents the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions among all sectors of the economy. The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) is in the process of restructuring its transportation system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a result of the Navahine settlement. HDOT's strategy is contained in its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which clearly emphasizes public transportation as part of its effort to reduce emissions. This bill is in line with HDOT's plan.

This bill is also in line with the Hawaii State Energy Office's (HSEO) Pathways to Decarbonization Report, which discourages single-occupancy vehicle travel and encourages access to shared transportation as elements of its decarbonization strategy. HSEO also supports a transportation system that is equitable and affordable.

Providing children the opportunity to ride transit fare-free would not only expand public transportation, it would also provide financial relief for families, particularly low- and moderate-income families. Currently, fare-free transit is offered by a few programs, but they are limited in scope. This bill extends fare-free access to all youth.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge the committee to pass this bill.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 12:14:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jesika H.	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. In recent years due to the lack of school bus drivers, MANY students have been forced to take the city bus to get to school. In order for the student to qualify for the free bus pass they have to live within a certain mile radius. All others who dont live within the radius have to find other means of transportation or pay out of pocket to ride the bus/rail to school. This has been unfortunate for many families as it is another added expense that many of Hawai'i families can't afford. My son is 16 and I pay \$40 per month for his HOLO youth pass. I strongly support this bill. Mahalo

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:14:49 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Virginia Tincher	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HB1879, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i.

Transportation costs place a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit.

This bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. And since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible.

Mahalo,

Virginia Tincher

Honolulu

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:23:23 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ann Dorsey	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I urge you to support HB1879 HD1.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Thank you

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:26:59 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Keith Neal	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Support

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:28:20 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Michelle Salazar Hyman	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

As a mom of 3 kids, I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 2:58:40 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Melissa Barker	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members,

Please support HB1879 which would establish free fare public transport for youth.

Thank you,

Melissa Barker

Kapaa, HI

Testimony in Support of HB1879 | Keiki Ride Free
Hearing with the House Committee on Human Services and Homelessness
Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at 9:30 am in Room 329

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Committee Members,

My name is Mia Nishiguchi, a senior at Kalani High School, and the Chairperson of the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council. I am writing in strong support of HB1879 / SB2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai'i.

Since my first year of high school, I've been digging through my family's coin jar for quarters so I can pay for the bus. I also remember the sheer look of fear on my classmates' and friends' faces when they forgot their bus pass or didn't have money. As days go by, the constant complaint I hear in my school and in my community is the rising cost of transportation. Public school education is free, so why isn't transportation to get there free as well? It is vital for keiki to have free access to transportation not only to reach school, but also to participate fully in the opportunities that shape their futures: after-school tutoring, athletics, internships, part-time jobs, and community programs. For many families in Hawai'i, especially those already balancing rising housing, food, and energy costs, transportation becomes an invisible barrier: one that quietly decides whether a student can stay late for debate club, accept a shift at work, or attend a college-prep workshop across town. When access to learning depends on spare change in a pocket or a half-used bus pass, equity stops at the curb.

In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires the HDOT to “take any actions necessary” to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means to protect children's constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and to preserve Hawai'i's public trust resources for present and future generations.

In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. This bill is one of those critical solutions.

Transportation costs also place a significant financial burden on Hawai'i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Keiki Ride Free would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties. It would also significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more.

This bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. And since transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles/rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible for all Keiki.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 7:39:55 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Victoria Anderson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this measure, which will significantly increase youth transit ridership, and therefore reduce transportation costs, and overall household financial burdens on families, especially low-income families who depend on public transportation. In doing so, it will both reduce traffic and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mahalo!

Victoria Anderson, Palolo

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 9:13:50 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moss Kuon	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha e Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds and members of the committee,

My name is Moss Kuon, and I am testifying in strong support of HB1879. Transportation is extremely important, especially for youth and families. By expanding access and furthering affordability in our public transportation systems, we can help hardworking families, and allow youth to pursue dreams and opportunities.

I was dissappointed to see that some of the language in Keiki Ride Free was watered down in the most recent amendment. However, I think this is a good time to reflect, re-define some terms, and work together to reach our goals.

Out of the few amendments to HB1879, one stood out- the narrowing of eligibility and prioritization of low-income families. While I agree that it is important to support our low-income families, it is also important to support the "messy middle": families who are above the income limits for government assistance, yet still are heavily burdened by the high cost of living in Hawai'i. They make just enough to keep afloat, but live paycheck to paycheck. I feel we must assist these hardworking families by taking a financial and logistical weight off their backs- the transportation of youth.

The person that comes to mind is my neighbor. She is a single mom of three wonderful daughters. She has a mortgage to pay, groceries to buy, gas to fill, healthcare to pay, as well as tuition and sports dues. She was doing well until her husband started to hit her. Now, he has left the picture, but his name is still on their deed and on her marriage certificate. Divorcing him would mean losing her home, although she is the one who pays the mortgage. Luckily, Maui County has free bus fares for youth. But, think of the thousands of parents in Hawai'i that do not have that access. We must serve them, too.

Let us work together to find a solution that supports low-income families while also keeping in mind the struggles of the lower-middle and middle class.

In addition to redefining the language of eligibility, I feel that we need to provide fares for the aides of disabled youth. Increasing independence and mobility of disabled youth is top of mind for me, as I am chronically ill and a wheelchair user myself. Many youth may need support or assistance navigating public transit or activities that they get to by transit. By providing free fares

for an aide accompanying a disabled youth, it lowers the barrier of entry for disabled youth to participate in society.

When I go out to a concert or to a community event, I struggle with sensory issues, brain fog, pain, and carrying items, and often need someone to assist me when I inevitably get overwhelmed. Having fares for my aide covered would make it easier and more realistic for me to engage in and live a rich public life.

Along these lines, some disabled youth need extra time to graduate, making them older than their peers at the end of their senior year. I believe that they should not be excluded, and that we should define youth as: "from birth until the completion of senior year of high school".

I hope that we can work together to make Keiki Ride Free a success, and support our youth.

Mahalo for the chance to testify.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:22:14 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jackie Keefe and I am **in strong support of HB1879**, which would implement a top priority from the youth-led 2024 Climate Future Forum and goals of the inaugural Hawai‘i Youth Transportation Council.

Transportation costs place a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. The Subsidized Youth Transit Program, also known as "Keiki Ride Free," would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties.

HB1879 HD1 would significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more. By doing so, this bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles & rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Please pass this bill for the future of our keiki.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/15/2026 11:52:58 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Fryer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support HB1879, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i.

Transportation costs are a significant burden for Hawaii’s families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Keiki Ride Free would reduce these costs with a universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties. This would make transit simpler and more predictable for young people, improving their access to education, extracurricular activities, and employment opportunities. Free transit for keiki would also encourage lifelong ridership, shifting us away from over-reliance on private vehicles. Emissions and air pollution would be reduced, and so would Oahu’s persistent traffic problems.

In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the Navahine v. Hawai‘i Department of Transportation settlement agreement, which requires the HDOT to “take any actions necessary” to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island transit by no later than 2045. This bill is one of those critical solutions. To ensure a healthy future for Hawaii’s keiki, we need efforts like HB1879.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:45:16 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Tipton	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill. Our keiki should not force their parents to be their personal chauffeurs. This bill would allow them greater independence and learn how to function on their own.

Public transit should be free for us all. Making it free for keiki is a good place to start.

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 8:57:09 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne L. Manago	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Daphne Manago, and I am a member of the Hawai'i Bicycling League and I strongly support HB1879 (Keiki Ride Free).

Giving our keiki the opportunity to ride the bus for free will help them develop independence and build lifelong skills. Growing up, my siblings and I were driven to school and all of our activities, so we did not learn how to use public transportation. Looking back, that was an unfortunate missed opportunity for us to gain confidence and self-sufficiency at a young age.

This program will also ease transportation costs for families who are already struggling and help reduce the number of cars on our roads. Fewer cars mean less traffic congestion and a safer, more sustainable community for everyone.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important program.

Respectfully submitted,

Daphne Manago

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:28:08 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ronald "Ron" Reilly	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Marten, Vice Chair Olds, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ron Reilly, and I live in Volcano Village. I am writing in strong support of HB1879, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i.

Mahalo, Ron Reilly, Volcano Village

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 9:36:51 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dalan Kam	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

My name is Dalan Kam I am testifying in support of HB1879. I am a resident of the Waialae-Kahala community and someone who commutes on public transit every day.

Cost of living is the main issue that plagues all of us in Hawai'i. Making public transit free for all of our youth will significantly help our most financially vulnerable and support families that want to have kids.

While there are currently reduced or free bus fare programs like the EXPRESS program, TheBus's existing free youth ride with an adult policy, or the youth HOLO card, parents may not have the time to navigate the processes to be able to take advantage of these benefits. Immigrant parents especially may not even know these exist, and may not be able to navigate the highly bureaucratic system with English as their second language. Having a universal, easy to understand policy that needs only the ID that kids are already given is a leap towards accessibility.

Public transit is a near universal good for kids. Public transit offers a rare third space where kids can be around others in a controlled environment that is outside of home, school, or organized activities. The social interaction that kids have on buses is irreplaceable, and ever dwindling in the age of the internet.

Most importantly, Keiki Ride Free will incentivize kids to ride public transit and accustom themselves to it. People are afraid of what they are unfamiliar with, and having kids understand transit from a young age will make them well equipped to riding it as working adults, and even teaching their parents and friends how to ride.

I urge the committee to pass HB1879, for the future of our children. Mahalo for your time.

LATE

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 10:38:43 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Anne Leake	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committe Chair, Co-chair and Committee members,

I am writing in strong support of HB1879 because it makes sense. If Keiki Ride Free and enjoy the experience, they will become the next generation of transit riders. Imagine less traffic on H1 during rush hour. This bill will also allow children from low-income families to participate in school events and sports without the burden of transit fares that can compete with the food bill for the family. Please vote yes for HB1879. Mahalo for the opportunity to speak.

LATE

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 11:48:27 AM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Glenn Choy	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill.

LATE

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 1:11:54 PM
Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Summer begnaud	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am writing in support of this bill because it feels like the pono way to handle transportation for keiki, who are a marginalized demographic and deserve this kind of support from residents and the government. Having free, statewide transit fare for all youth is very important for keiki to get to school and to support families who don't have vehicles and need better access to multimodal transportation options. This will also reduce traffic which is felt by all kama 'āina.

LATE

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 5:14:52 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
pamela burrell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

PLease support HB1879!

This bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. And since transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Pamela Burrell, Kalihiwai, Kaua'i

LATE

HB-1879-HD-1

Submitted on: 2/16/2026 5:20:50 PM

Testimony for HSH on 2/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
An Vo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is An and I'm a college public health student in O'ahu. I strongly support HB1879. Free transportation increases access to opportunities for our youth. I come from a low-income family, so I was eligible for a free holoholo card from my high school. The card was free for me, but it was not free to the school, and I'm grateful I had that opportunity to use the bus for free to get from home to school. I remember when I was a kid, my mother took me on the bus and she did not have money to pay for both of us to go home. The bus driver did not allow my mother and me to stay on the bus because they wanted money, and I felt like I was extra baggage for my mom. I was probably a dollar more since I was a youth, but coming from a low-income family means I have stories like this to tell, where my mom struggled to pay a few extra dollars so that she and I could go home. Now that I'm in college, I pay for my holoholo and college doesn't provide free school lunch or free holo cards because I'm no longer a student in O'ahu's public education system. Needing to pay for transportation and food while still having a low-income family status makes me wish I took more opportunities to use the free holo card in high school. My holo card expires during the summer, though, so I have to pay \$3 as an adult per bus ride, and this was a nightmare when I had a couple events in a day that I needed to bus to, adding \$3 (to go to work) after another \$3 (to go to a public health event) then a final \$3 (to go home). Moreover, I presented about transportation and learned how cars take up more space on the roads, fitting only 1-2 people each car, while busses carry multiple people and use the same amount of gas. There can be 5 cars on the road using 1 gallon of gas each (5 gallons total), while 1 bus takes up less space, carries more passengers, and takes up 1 gallon of gas because it's one vehicle. Plus, car crashes occur daily due to poor drivers, but I've never heard of a bus crash which is more rare, and that's because bus drivers are trained due to their employment as bus drivers. I urge you to support HB1879 because it will enhance access to opportunities for youth and lead to reduced greenhouse emissions and contribute to a world that we try to make it as green as possible.

Mahalo,
An
Honolulu