



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

**Date:** 02/03/2026

**Time:** 10:30 AM

**Location:** 430 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** TRN

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

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

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Establishes a fare-free 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 fare-free youth transit program special fund. Appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature.

**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB1879, establishing a fare-free youth transit program coordinated with the counties statewide.

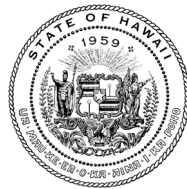
Although public transit options vary from county to county, HB1879 is a broad approach to serving Hawaii's youth population by improving access to school, extracurricular activities, and work opportunities. It also aligns with Hawaii's climate goals and supports the state's commitments under Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §§ 225P-5 and 225P-8 by reducing emissions and reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

HB1879 responsibly identifies a stable funding source through the environmental response, energy, and food security tax, aligning this program with the tax's purpose and the state's decarbonization commitments, including those outlined in the DOT's 2025 Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this measure.

**JOSH GREEN M.D.**  
GOVERNOR

**SYLVIA LUKE**  
LT. GOVERNOR



**GARY S. SUGANUMA**  
DIRECTOR

**KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII  
**DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION**

Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau  
P.O. BOX 259

HONOLULU, HAWAII 96809  
PHONE NO: (808) 587-1540  
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**TESTIMONY OF  
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

**TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

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

**BEFORE THE:**

House Committee on Transportation

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 3, 2026  
**TIME:** 10:30 a.m.  
**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Conference Room 430

Chair Kila, Vice-Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee:

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

H.B. 1879 establishes within the Department of Transportation (HDOT) a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties, and a fare-free 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 is effective upon approval, except for Sections 5 and 6, which take effect on July 1, 2026.

DOTAX notes that the bill's reference to "section 243-3.5(6)" under section \_-3 on page 8, line 6 may be a typo, as this bill would be amending new subsection 243-3.5(a)(6).

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

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



## Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Committee on Transportation

February 3, 2026 at 10:30AM

Conference Room 430

**HB1879**

**Relating to Public Transit**

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Committee Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB1879**, which would establish and appropriate funds for the Department of Transportation to create a statewide fare-free youth transit program, benefiting all residents 18 and under.

The 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 could result in significant savings for households while allowing youth further autonomy to access extracurriculars, internships, and recreational activities with friends and loved ones.

Free 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.

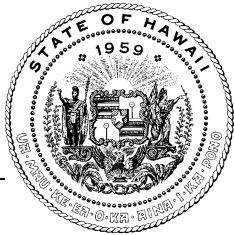
While there are existing state and county programs that offer fare-free or reduced-fare transit—such as the EXPRESS County Bus Program, which is limited to students attending their home school and living at least 1.5 miles away—this bill would eliminate remaining transportation cost barriers and extend fare-free access to all youth.

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.



# HAWAII STATE ENERGY OFFICE STATE OF HAWAII

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Telephone:  
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JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE  
LT. GOVERNOR

MARK B. GLICK  
CHIEF ENERGY OFFICER

(808) 451-6648  
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## Testimony of **MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer**

### before the **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

Tuesday, February 03, 2026  
10:30 AM  
State Capitol, Conference Room 430 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on  
**HOUSE BILL NO. 1879**

### **RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.**

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers the following comments on House Bill No. 1879, which establishes a fare-free youth transit program within the Hawai'i Department of Transportation in coordination with county transit services, 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.

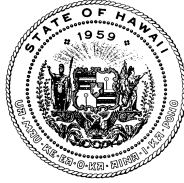
HSEO's 2023 *Pathways to Decarbonization* Report emphasizes that reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for short and frequent trips, is an important complement to vehicle electrification. The report highlights land use, travel behavior, and access to shared transportation 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 fare-free transit affects ridership, system performance, and emissions and to inform future policy decisions. Accordingly, HSEO appreciates the bill's emphasis on data-driven evaluation.

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, employment, and essential services, while coordinated statewide approaches may reduce administrative complexity and improve consistency across county systems.

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.



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  
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

REPRESENTATIVE DARIUS K. KILA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing Date: February 3, 2026

Room Number: Conference Room 430  
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 the public health implications of House Bill 1879  
4 (H.B. 1879), which establishes within the DOT a fare-free youth transit program to be  
5 coordinated with the counties. The measure also establishes a fare-free youth transit program  
6 special fund, requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, and allocates  
7 moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth  
8 transit program special fund.
- 9 **Department Testimony:** Despite Hawaii's favorable climate, geography, and reputation for  
10 active outdoor living, only 33% of adult and 18% of high school students in Hawaii met federal  
11 guidelines for physical activity.<sup>1,2</sup> The design of roads that integrate active transportation  
12 options like walking, bicycling, and transit is a public health concern since the safety and  
13 accessibility of a community's built environment can promote or hinder physical activity. This

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<sup>1</sup> Hawaii Health Data Warehouse, Hawaii State Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/PhysActMeetRec/PhysActMeetRec_HS_ST.html).

1 includes removing barriers to safely and conveniently accessing active transportation options to  
2 destinations such as schools, shopping, and worksites. Safe, accessible, and walkable  
3 communities encourage physical activity and can promote better health outcomes in  
4 communities whose populations are at less risk for serious chronic diseases and conditions such  
5 as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

6 The establishment of a fare-free youth transit program is a significant step forward in  
7 advancing a public health framework that prioritizes equity, safety, and environmental  
8 resilience.<sup>4</sup> By removing financial barriers to public transit, this measure will address a critical  
9 social determinant of health, ensuring that a child's socioeconomic status does not limit their  
10 access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and nutritious food. This universal,  
11 fare-free system replaces fragmented county programs with a simple, reliable solution that  
12 eases the financial burden on Hawaii's families while fostering independence and confidence in  
13 our keiki.

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

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<sup>3</sup> CDC *About Physical Activity*. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> 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/>

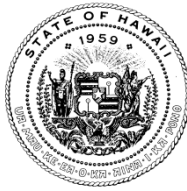
<sup>5</sup> Saelens BE, Vernez Moudon A, Kang B, Hurvitz PM, Zhou C. Relation between public transit use and physical activity. *Am J Public Health*. 2014;104(5):854-859. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302101

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.

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



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU  
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EDWIN H. SNIFFEN  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors  
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele  
DREANALEE K. KALILI  
TAMMY L. LEE  
CURT T. OTAGURO  
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

Tuesday, February 3, 2026  
10:30 a.m.  
State Capitol, 430

HB1879  
**RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

House Committee on Transportation

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The Department of Transportation (DOT) strongly supports House Bill 1879, and proposes one amendment.

House Bill 1879 would establish a fare-free public transit program for youth statewide, removing cost barriers to public transit use for children and families, and equitably providing an affordable transportation option for all of Hawaii's keiki. By making the bus and Skyline free for all youth from birth through high school seniors plus an accompanying guardian traveling with youth 0-12, this program provides direct relief to families who may be struggling with the high cost of living in Hawaii. This proposal has strong added benefits of reducing traffic congestion, reducing emissions, improving youth health, and providing transportation for keiki if there is an emergency during school hours.

The DOT suggests that the following, or similar, language be added to Section 1:

"The legislature further finds that fare-free transit for youth is important for emergency response on all islands. In the event of an emergency during school hours such as a tsunami or fire, it is important that drivers stay off the roads as much as possible so that emergency response vehicles can respond immediately and without traffic slowing or blocking their access. During times of emergency, public transit provides critical transportation without causing traffic. Providing all students through high-school seniors with fare-free transit will give the students, families and schools peace of mind to know that all students have a way home."

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

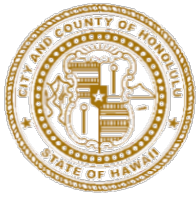
vehicle travel” and emphasizes the importance of incorporating stakeholder input, including that of Hawai‘i’s youth, in implementing transportation decarbonization strategies (Plan p. 2). House Bill 1879 is being championed by Hawaii Youth Transportation Council with the support of other youth councils 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 seems to be an appropriate funding source as this proposal would 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 appreciates our ongoing collaborative partnerships with all counties which is essential for a safe, efficient, and seamlessly connected transportation system. We appreciate the bill's requirement for program evaluation and reporting at the two-year mark. This will allow us to monitor the program's effectiveness, make recommendations to the legislature if changes are needed, and ensure that the transportation needs of Hawaii's youth and families, especially low- and moderate-income families, are addressed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of this bill which is expected to provide financial relief to local households, and significantly improve access to educational, recreational, and employment opportunities for young people across Hawaii.





**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  
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Tuesday, February 3, 2026

House Committee on Transportation  
Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 10:30 AM  
**HB 1879** Testimony in Support

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, & Members of the House Committee on Transportation:

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.

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 to youth 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, reading "Tyler Dos Santos-Tam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tyler" being the most prominent.

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

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES  
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE 'ŌHUA  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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RICK BLANGIARDI  
MAYOR  
MEIA



J. ROGER MORTON  
DIRECTOR  
PO'O

HONGLONG LI, Ph.D, P.E.  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
HOPE PO'O

TESTIMONY OF J. ROGER MORTON  
DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
**Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 10:30 AM**  
**Conference RM 430 and Via Videoconference**

TO: Rep. Darius K. Kila, Chair, Rep. Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee on Transportation

RE: SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1879, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT, WITH RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee on Transportation. My name is J. Roger Morton, and I serve as the Director of the Department of Transportation Services (DTS) for the City and County of Honolulu.

DTS strongly supports HB 1879, which would establish and fund a statewide Fare-Free Youth Transit Program administered by the Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT), to reimburse county transit agencies for providing fare-free public transportation service to eligible youth riders. O'ahu is home to approximately 200,000 children and youth (under 18), representing the largest concentration of eligible riders in the State and a major opportunity for statewide transportation, climate, and affordability goals. From a transportation policy standpoint, the single best way to build long-term transit ridership is to expose residents to public transportation at an early age—when travel habits are being formed and before dependency on private vehicle travel becomes entrenched. DTS is committed to partnering closely with HDOT to implement this program quickly, efficiently, and with strong accountability.

While DTS strongly supports the intent of HB 1879, we respectfully recommend amendments to ensure the program is fiscally responsible, auditable, and sustainable for county transit agencies. Additionally, to avoid budget uncertainty and ensure stable transit service delivery, DTS recommends:

1) Add explicit language requiring that HDOT awards shall fully reimburse county transit agencies for foregone youth fare revenues (or reimburse according to a defined formula), and not as an unfunded or partially funded mandate.

House Committee on Transportation  
H.B. No 1879, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT  
February 3, 2026

2) Require the use of HOLO or another auditable credential. To ensure accountability and program integrity, fare-free rides should be administered through HOLO or another auditable credentialing method. It is noted that Skyline requires electronic media for entry. DTS and HDOT are currently exploring expansion of HOLO statewide and are actively coordinating with the other counties to enable broader interoperability and consistent fare policy administration. If a statewide fare-free youth program is implemented, DTS will work collaboratively with HDOT to simplify eligibility verification and HOLO issuance so the program can be effectively monitored and evaluated.

3) Confirm that eligible program expenses include both actual operations and implementation expenses. DTS recommends adding language making clear that HDOT awards may cover not only foregone fare revenues, but also the eligible costs required to implement the program successfully.

4) Recognize that public transportation is distinct from traditional school bus service. Transit provides mobility to all. It should not be considered an end all or a substitute for school buses where transit is not feasible. Moreover, under federal law, transit agencies are prohibited from providing exclusive service to schools.

HB 1879 represents a forward-looking policy that will expand opportunity for Hawai'i's youth while strengthening long-term ridership and reducing dependence on private vehicles. DTS appreciates HDOT's leadership and is ready to work collaboratively to implement this program in a way that is efficient, equitable, auditable, and financially sustainable. For these reasons, DTS supports HB 1879 and respectfully requests the Committee consider the recommended amendments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony with recommended amendments.



**Testimony in Support for HB1879 - Relating to Public Transit**  
**Committee on Transportation (TRN)**  
**Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026 at 10:30AM**

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Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the TRN 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.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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/>.

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> Under Bill 54, youth monthly and annual passes will increase by 12.5 percent, costing nearly \$500 per year.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



# HAWAII YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

HYTC Testimony for the xx Committee on xx  
SB 2699/ HB 1879 | [Date]

**IN STRONG SUPPORT**

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. **Keiki Ride Free is a bill that we are deeply passionate about as a council.** It makes Hawai'i **more affordable**, gives more **youth access to their community**, **enables homeless youth to attend school**, enables **flexible emergency management plans**, and so much more.

In our inaugural 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 some form of advocacy. **Keiki Ride Free is the culmination of that work**, with the support of our HDOT 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.

Keiki Ride Free **enhances opportunities for youth**, regardless of where they live, by giving them access to jobs, community events, reliable school transportation, and the ability to advocate and participate in government. This bill **eliminates barriers in the DOE 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**.

While Maui and Hawai'i Counties already have fare-free transit, they 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 for a while, 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**.



Along with this, many programs that aim to serve low-income and houseless youth **fall short in many respects**, especially because the requirements don't allow them access to these programs. The *DOE Express* Program has many stipulations, such as that a student must be a Hawai'i public school student attending middle/or intermediate or high school with an active HIDOE ID number, and must attend their home school while residing 1.5 miles or more from their school. These requirements **prohibit students who have changed schools due to bullying, students who live too close to campus, and students attending private or charter schools from accessing this program**. Additionally, the "walkzone" does not account for the safety of walking in that area or whether it is even ADA accessible.

These last few points are exactly why the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council sought to make, and now strongly advocates for, Keiki Ride Free. It allows youth, **regardless of island of residence, financial status, school of choice, or physical ability, to have access to free transportation**. Keiki Ride Free is also aimed at the **Homeless and low-income families of Hawai'i, allowing them to access a safe and reliable form of transportation free from the worry of fare hikes that would punish them just because of their financial status**.

Please, help us pass this for the youth of Hawai'i and vote in favor of SB 2699/HB 1879.

*Mahalo,*



*Moss Kuon*

Moss Kuon  
Press Secretary  
Central Maui Representative

*Mia Nishiguchi*

Mia Nishiguchi  
Council Chair  
O'ahu Honolulu Representative

*Luke Gee*

Luke Gee  
Council Vice-Chair  
West Side Hawai'i 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

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 5:47:28 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Heather Lusk	Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake and members of the committee,

The Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center strongly supports HB 1879 which would establish a fare-free youth transit program. This will support youth independence and long-term transit habits, ease pressure on school bus operations, and advance the state's commitment to decarbonizing our transportation system for future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify

Heather Lusk

ED, HHHRC





Email: [communications@ulupono.com](mailto:communications@ulupono.com)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
Tuesday, February 3, 2026 — 10:30 a.m.

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

Dear Chair Kila 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**, which establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; establishes a fare-free 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 fare-free youth transit program special fund; and appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup>Based 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/>

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

<sup>4</sup><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.

Importantly, this program represents the direct implementation of a recommendation from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation's Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan,<sup>5</sup> as informed by the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council and other stakeholders. It also complements the state's investment in Safe Routes to School<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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,

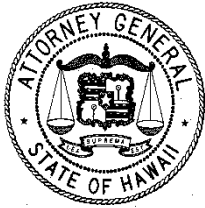
Micah Munekata  
Vice President of Government Affairs

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

<sup>6</sup>[https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2026/01/SRTSAC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2026\\_accessible-v2.pdf](https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2026/01/SRTSAC_Annual_Report_2026_accessible-v2.pdf)

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



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA  
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2026**

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**ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:**

H.B. NO. 1879, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

**BEFORE THE:**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 3, 2026 **TIME:** 10:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:** State Capitol, Room 430

**TESTIFIER(S):** Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or  
Marjorie A. Lau, Deputy Attorney General

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Chair Kila and Members of the Committee:

The Department of the Attorney General (Department) provides the following comments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish within the Department of Transportation (HDOT) a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; (2) establish a fare-free youth transit program special fund (FFYTP Special Fund); (3) require biannual evaluations of the new program and FFYTP Special Fund; (4) allocate moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax (Tax) to the FFYTP Special Fund; and (5) appropriate moneys into and out of the FFYTP Special Fund.

In section 1, the bill describes the need to provide access to a universal fare-free transit program for all children through high school age. The bill states the Legislature's belief that a universal fare-free transit program would eliminate barriers to public transit and reduce family transportation costs, and that increasing transit ridership will support the State's emission reduction goals. Additionally, the Legislature finds that the proposed program is directly relevant to the State's environmental goals and is an appropriate use of funds from the Tax imposed pursuant to section 243-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). The Tax is imposed upon petroleum product and fossil fuel sold by a distributor to any retail dealer or end user.

Section -3 of the new HRS chapter added by section 2 of the bill on page 8, line 1, to page 9, line 15, establishes the FFYTP Special Fund to be administered by the HDOT Director of Transportation. The bill provides that deposits into the FFYTP Special Fund may include (1) the portion of the Tax specified under section 243-3.5(a)(6), HRS, (2) moneys appropriated to the FFYTP Special Fund by the Legislature; and (3) investment earnings, gifts, donations, or other income received by HDOT.

The Department has concerns that the fund may not meet all of the requirements of section 37-52.3, HRS, which provides that special funds shall: (1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose and scope of the program and an explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; (2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; (3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; and (4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining.

While the bill describes the purpose and program intended to be funded, at least in part, by the FFYTP Special Fund, this bill does not describe why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; providing an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; or demonstrating how the initiative will be financially self-sustaining.

We strongly recommend adding provisions to this bill that explain how the FFYTP Special Fund meets the criteria for the establishment of a special fund as required by section 37-52.3, HRS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



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

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Tuesday, February 3, 2026 at 10:30 AM**

### **Testimony in Strong Support of HB1879 - Relating to Public Transit**

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Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Transportation 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.

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



## HOUSE BILL 1879, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

FEBRUARY 3, 2026 · TRN HEARING

**POSITION:** Support.

**RATIONALE:** The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus supports HB 1892, relating to public transit, which establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; establishes a fare-free 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 fare-free youth transit program special fund; appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund; and requires reports to the Legislature.

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. This 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.

HB 1879 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](mailto:educationcaucusdph@gmail.com) · 808-679-7454**





## 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

Titimaeta Ta'ase, JD  
Secretary  
Taase Law Office

Jonathan Ching  
Kaiser Permanente

Tammy Ho  
The Queen's Medical Center

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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 2, 2026

To: Representative Darius K. Kila, Chair  
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Transportation

RE: Support for HB 1879, Relating To Public Transit

Hrg: February 3rd, 2026 at 10:30 AM in Conference Room 430

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> and the Healthy Eating + Active Living<sup>2</sup> (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **strong support of HB 1879**, which establishes the statewide Keiki Ride Free Program to provide fare-free public transit for youth aged 18 and under.

### 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, this bill promotes fair access, reduces absenteeism, and supports 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.<sup>3</sup> For young people, free access connects them to school, after-school programs, healthcare, jobs, and community, while building lifelong transit habits.

<sup>1</sup> 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 wherever people live, learn, work, age, and play.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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/>.



### **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 just passed more than a 10% increase to fares, creating an even greater barrier to transportation.<sup>4</sup> 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 eligibility<sup>5</sup>
- Ensure students from working families just above the free school lunch thresholds are not excluded,
- Increase overall attendance, retention, and educational opportunity statewide<sup>6</sup>
- Reduce traffic vehicle crashes, air pollution, and associated respiratory illnesses, and increase physical activity levels<sup>7</sup>
- 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.<sup>8</sup>

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren Loor".

Lauren Loor  
Healthy Eating + Active Living Statewide Program Manager

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

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

<sup>5</sup> 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>

<sup>6</sup> 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>

<sup>7</sup> CDC. (2026, January 14). Improving Health Through Transportation Advocacy Policy.

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

<sup>8</sup> 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>.

**ADDRESS**

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bicycle@hbl.org

**HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

Tuesday - Feb 3, 2026 - 10:00am

**Hawai'i Bicycling League Strongly Supports HB 1879, relating to Public Transit**

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake 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, the Keiki Ride Free bill. 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.

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

**Eduardo Hernandez**

Advocacy Director

Hawai'i Bicycling League



6

## O'ahu Youth Action Board

Est. 2017

Co-Chair  
Efren Berrones  
Co-Chair  
Jean Grey  
Vice Chair  
Kahekili "Kai" Alip  
Treasurer  
Dawson Pahia-Kuloloia  
Social Coordinator  
Laleiyana "Lala" Caton  
Communications Coordinator  
Kyle-Ann Bobo

### TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB 1879 Relating to Public Transit

TO: House Committee on Transportation

FROM: Efren Berrones- Co-Chair of O'ahu Youth Action Board, Partners In  
Care (PIC)

**Hearing: Tuesday, February 3rd, 10:30 AM**

Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the House Committee on  
Transportation,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support with  
amendments of HB 1879, Relating to Free Public Bus Access for Youth.

My name is Efren Berrones and I represent the O'ahu Youth Action Board  
(OYAB). OYAB is a designated board composed of youth with lived  
experience of homelessness on O'ahu, advocating for policy changes that  
directly impact young people in our community. We strongly support HB  
1879 and respectfully request an amendment to extend the age range to  
include young adults ages 18–24.

For our young people—especially those experiencing homelessness—a bus  
pass is not just transportation. It is a lifeline. It is the way they get to school,  
to work, to that critical appointment with their case manager, to the doctor,  
or to that apartment viewing that could change everything. The bus is their  
pathway to stability, opportunity, and survival. Without reliable, affordable  
access to public transportation, youth experiencing homelessness face  
impossible barriers to the very services and opportunities designed to help  
them escape homelessness.

With the forthcoming increase in bus fares, the financial burden will only  
intensify for our most vulnerable young people. Many are already choosing  
between a bus pass and food, between getting to a job interview and  
paying for a shower at a community center. These should not be the choices  
our youth have to make.

Currently, homeless youth providers such as Residential Youth Services &  
Empowerment (RYSE), Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center (HHRC),  
and Hale Kipa are stepping in to cover the cost of bus passes for the young

people they serve. While we are grateful for their commitment, this practice diverts significant portions of already-limited program budgets away from other critical supportive services—case management, mental health counseling, job training, life skills development, and housing navigation. By providing free public bus access, the state would free up these essential dollars to be redirected toward services that directly support young people in achieving stability and self-sufficiency.

This is why we respectfully urge the committee to amend the bill to extend eligibility to young adults ages 18–24. This request is grounded in both federal guidance and developmental science. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines youth as individuals ages 18–24 for the purposes of homelessness assistance and data collection. HUD's Annual Homelessness Assessment Report classifies unaccompanied youth as young adults ages 18–24 in households without children who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian during their episode of homelessness. Aligning Hawai'i's definition of youth in this bill with HUD's framework would ensure consistency across federal and state policy and allow our young people to access the full range of support they need.

Beyond federal definitions, current research on brain development further supports this expanded age range. Research indicates that a young person's ability to regulate behavior and emotions is not fully mature until their mid-to-late twenties, with the latest findings suggesting the upper range may be as high as 25–30. Young adults ages 18–24 are still in a critical window of development—navigating decisions around housing, employment, education, and independence—and are especially vulnerable when those decisions are being made without a stable foundation. Extending eligibility to this age group reflects what the science and federal policy already recognize: that young adulthood is not yet a period of full independence, and that meaningful support during these years can make the difference between stability and long-term hardship.

Homelessness does not end at age 18, and neither do the barriers to transportation. Young adults transitioning out of foster care, aging out of youth programs, or working minimum-wage jobs while trying to secure housing face the same challenges. Including this age group would maximize the impact of this bill and align with both best practices in youth development and the federal framework already guiding homelessness services.

Free public bus access for youth and young adults is an investment in equity, opportunity, and our community's future. It removes a fundamental barrier to education, employment, health care, and housing—the very things that break cycles of poverty and homelessness.

We urge you to pass HB 1879 with an amendment extending eligibility to ages 18–24, and give our young people the access they need to thrive.

Mahalo for your consideration and commitment to Hawai'i's youth.

With Aloha,

*Efren Berrones*

**Efren Berrones**

Co-Chair, O'ahu Youth Action Board

[efrenb@partnersincareoahu.org](mailto:efrenb@partnersincareoahu.org)









To: The House Committee on Transportation (TRN)  
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org  
Date: Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 10:30am

### **In strong support of HB1879**

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Committee members,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HB1879** that would establish within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. This measure establishes a fare-free youth transit program special fund, requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, and allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund.

In 2024, the Hawaii 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 Hawaii'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, 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 Hawaii. To increase safety and accessibility, the program would also offer free transit fares for one adult accompanying a child age 12 and under.

Transportation costs are a significant burden for families—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, easing financial strain on families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would support families while making transit easier, safer, and more predictable for keiki. In addition, this program would greatly improve youth independence and their access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare and more.

This Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from

private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies. Importantly, HB1879 allows our keiki to be part of the solution.

To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like HB1879. 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

*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 Transportation  
Re: **HB1879 – Relating to Public Transit**  
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 3, 2026; 10:30 AM

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB1879**, which would establish within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties, as well as establish a fare-free 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**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:11:13 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair & TRN Committee,

My name is Dave Mulinix, Greenpeace Hawaii State Representative, on behalf of our thousands member and supporters statewide we Stand In Strong Support of HB1879 that Establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Establishes a fare-free 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 fare-free youth transit program special fund. Appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature.

This bill has many positive aspects not only does it provide an experience that will teach 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 homes on the north shore of Oahu falling in the ocean, our extended drought conditions, and the global warming caused fire that obliterated Lahina. And 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.

The bill is an excellent step in the right direction and it helps to fulfill the agreement reached in the Navahive vs HDOT settlement.

Mahalo for your kind attention.

Dave Mulinix, Statewide Representative

Greenpeace Hawaii



**Testimony in Support of HB1879**  
**Hearing on February 3, 2026 at 10:30am**  
House Committee on Transportation

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, 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, which establishes free transit for youth in Hawai'i.

HB1879 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 creates a more consistent and accessible system statewide.

In addition to affordability and equity benefits, HB1879 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 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 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. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your leadership on this critical issue.

Mahalo,

Doora Shin  
Our Children’s Trust  
Honolulu, Hawai‘i



# EARTHJUSTICE

REPRESENTATIVE DARIUS K. KILA, CHAIR  
REPRESENTATIVE TYSON K. MIYAKE, VICE-CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

TESTIMONY REGARDING HOUSE BILL NO. 1879  
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

February 3, 2026 10:30 A.M.  
Conference room 430 & videoconference  
415 South Beretania Street

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice-Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

Earthjustice submits this testimony in support of HB1879, the “Keiki Ride Free” bill. This bill would allow all children under 18 in Hawai‘i to ride free on all public transit and also provides for one free adult companion for youth under 12.

Earthjustice is a public interest law firm with over 30 years of experience serving communities in Hawai‘i nei and the greater Pacific. Our firm worked with Our Children’s Trust to represent the 13 young plaintiffs in the pathbreaking *Navahine* case because transportation is the single largest source of climate pollution in the state. This case resulted in the historic court-ordered settlement that commits the department to plan and achieve key benchmarks toward decarbonizing Hawai‘i’s transportation system.

HB1879 is an important step toward fulfilling the *Navahine* settlement because it promotes a win-win-win solution of reducing transportation costs for local families, expanding access and use of multimodal options, and curbing traffic and pollution. Household transportation expenses are a significant financial burden on local families, especially for low-income households. By creating a uniform free-fare system for all youth transit users statewide, this bill helps relieve that financial burden.

This bill is an investment in our next generations and our transportation system that will pay dividends for years to come. Mahalo for the opportunity to express our support for this important measure.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 5:03:13 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	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.

Allocation of resources for these kinds of initiatives demonstrates Hawaii's commitments to 'ohana and truly supporting families thriving here.



**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/30/2026 5:11:02 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Stephanie Austin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please support this bill!

January 31, 2026

Trevor Nagamine  
PO Box 37966  
Honolulu, HI 96837  
tnagamine.nb25@gmail.com

Rep. Darius Kila, Chair  
House Committee on Transportation  
Hawai'i House of Representatives  
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 322  
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: HB1879 — RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

Dear Chair Kila and Members of the Committee,

My name is Trevor Nagamine, and I am a resident of Mililani. I am also a member of Neighborhood Board No. 25 (Mililani/Waipio/Melemanu); however, I am submitting this testimony as an individual, and this testimony does not reflect an official position of Neighborhood Board No. 25. I am writing today to support HB1879.

HB1879 would establish a program to allow all children and high school students fare-free access to the various county public transit systems in Hawai'i. This would make it much easier for young individuals to get around, especially when they may not have other means available, and promote the use of public transit. As someone who presently rides TheBus and Skyline from time to time, learning how to ride TheBus when I was in middle school was an invaluable experience that has continued to be useful throughout my life.

I respectfully ask that the committee pass HB1879. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Mahalo,

Trevor Nagamine

**Testimony in Support of HB1879 | Keiki Ride Free**  
**[Hearing with the House Committee on Transportation](#)**

Tuesday February 3, 2026 at 10:30am in Room 430

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Debbie Millikan. 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.

It’s time that we take serious action to shift our perspective on public transit in Honolulu where traffic congestion is a daily menace. Imagine a future where children feel safe and independent in their ability to travel around our amazing island for internships and work based experiences, to ride to school and to visit family and friends. Let’s do this!!

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.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

*Debbie Millikan*

Debbie

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 7:17:54 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

## Comments:

I urge you to support HB1879 because of the many benefits it will provide. Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical factor in youth access to education, employment, and community activities across Hawai‘i, yet transportation costs and limited school bus capacity continue to create barriers for many families. These challenges disproportionately affect low- and moderate-income households and rural communities, contributing to student absenteeism and lost instructional time.

Establishing fare-free public transit for youth will increase transit use, ease pressure on school bus operations, support youth independence and long-term transit habits, and advance the state’s climate commitments under the Navahine Settlement by reducing emissions and traffic congestion.

Thank you helping our youth succeed.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 10:28:04 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I am writing in strong support of this bill. As a resident of the Big Island where all bus rides are free, I see the benefit that it has on the community. I believe this bill is a good step in the right direction of making bus rides free throughout the state.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 1:28:13 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jotis Russell-Christian	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**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 3:54:15 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bob Grossmann, PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the state can afford this measure, more youth will participate in afterschool programs. Cost of transportation has been a limiting factor.

The likely benefits would outweigh the lost revenues and may help increase future rail ridership.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 4:40:29 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sally Jo Manea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I support the establishment of a youth transportation entity as directed in this bill. Promoting use of public transport among youth could lead to long term public transportation usage, thereby reducing traffic congestion and pollution.

Sally Jo Manea, Kapaa, Kaua`i



**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 6:42:54 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Poranee Sponsel	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.

- Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai‘i’s youth and families.
- Ensuring free access to public transit can increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities, particularly for low- and moderate-income households and rural communities.
- Increases youth’s confidence and independence, encouraging a life-long use of public transit.  
Aligns with the commitments outlined within the Navahine Settlement, supporting decarbonization efforts by reducing emissions and easing traffic congestion.
- Eases the burden of driver and service shortages for school bus and public transit operations that contribute to elevated rates of student absenteeism and lost instructional time.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 1/31/2026 7:36:55 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John A. H. Tomoso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: HB 1879

Aloha mai,

I am in strong support of this Bill, which will provide fare-free public transit for youth. Yhis Bill supports youth independence and long-term transit habits, eases pressure on school bus operations, and advances our State's commitment to decarbonizing our transportation system for future generations.

Mahalo nui,

John A H Tomoso+, MSW, ACSW

51 Ku'ula St., Kahului, Maui, HI 96732-2906

john.a.h.tomoso@gmail.com

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 5:41:28 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moss Kuon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

As a youth who rides the bus, I love Keiki Ride Free. As a youth in a low income home, I feel that Keiki Ride Free is more important than ever.

With the passing of Bill 54, public transit will become unaffordable. And historically, the people who take public transit are more likely to be low income. Think about families that have more than one kid, and live in a rural area on O'ahu. The parents are likely working, and are unable to drive their kids to extracurriculars, or any other events the youth want to attend. So, they pay for a monthly pass. They have three kids, and pay \$120 so that their kids can get around. But a lot of families don't have \$120 to pay for transit for their kids. As a result, the youth lose out on independence and opportunities.

Keiki Ride Free would help to remedy this.

In Addition, I live on Maui, where our county already provides fare-free transit, going up to 25 if you have a UHMC student ID- but our busses are infrequent, and the busses are sometimes unsafe. There was a time for me during middle school where I would ride the bus every day, because I lacked other transportation. However, it was very inconvenient, because the MauiBus only stops every hour or 90 minutes.

If Keiki Ride Free passes, it would take the burden off of our counties to provide fare-free youth transit. With the extra money, I hope that the counties will reinvest it into their transportation system.

Please support fare-free transit. Mahalo.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 12:10:24 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support HB1879. I believe funding free public transit for our keiki will help assist them to get to school more easily and reduce absenteeism. Leaning on public transportation will help us with our climate goals and reduce carbon emissions. Mahalo for considering my views.

**Testimony in Support of HB1879 | Keiki Ride Free**  
**[Hearing with the House Committee on Transportation](#)**

Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 10:30 am in Room 430

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mia Nishiguchi, a senior at Kalani High School. 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. Gaining a public school education is free, so why isn’t the transportation to get there free as well? It is vital for keiki to have free access to transportation not only for not only for reaching school, but for participating 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**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 3:26:19 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 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 Hawaii. 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.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 5:21:29 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charlotte Madin	Plaintiff in Navahine v. HDOT	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,**

**My name is Charlotte Madin, and I live in Kailua, on O’ahu. 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.**

**As a 16-year-old who has not yet gotten her license, I rely on public transit, such as TheBus, very regularly. However, I notice that a lot of my peers prefer to get driven to places rather than taking the bus. I believe this is due to not only the unease of being a young person on the bus, but also due to the financial burden it imposes upon the youth and their families. Due to this burden that drives away potential bus riders (no pun intended), there are more people taking individual cars rather than a group of people in a single vehicle. This leads to more carbon emissions produced, which further worsens the state of our climate and exacerbates the effects of climate change we are already suffering from.**

**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.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:32:22 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 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!

## Testimony in Strong Support of HB1879

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Connor Ulene; I am a 14 year old who lives in Makawao on the island of Maui. I am a member of the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council, and the vice-chair of HYTC's Policy and Legislation committee. I am writing in strong support of **HB1879**, the bill to help further the progress made by the State of Hawai'i to push toward a clean 'āina for future generations by providing free universal public transit for youth across the islands.

As a youth in Hawai'i, the need for a future with clean energy is clear. Although the federal government may not acknowledge the role of climate change on future generations of youth, the science is clear, global warming has and will have catastrophic effects on the planet and our species. We need to take all actions possible to ensure that all future residents of Hawai'i get to experience the right to a clean environment as shown by the decision in **Navahine v. Hawai'i DOT**. HB1879 also gives free transit to youth who might not have transit options otherwise. As a youth in Maui County, I use the free public transit here, and wish that all keiki in Hawai'i have that same privilege. To me, it is clear that HB1879 provides a stepping stone along the path to a clean and equitable future which is why I strongly support this bill.

Sincerely,  
Connor Ulene

Handwritten signature of Connor Ulene in cursive script.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/1/2026 8:53:43 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
AdamDAuria	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Adam, and I am a resident of Maui. I am writing in strong support of HB1879 and the continuation and funding of the Fare-Free Youth Transit Program, also known as Keiki Ride Free.

Here on Maui, youth ages 24 and under are able to ride the bus for free, and it has made a meaningful and positive impact on our community. This program helps keiki and young adults learn how to use public transportation safely and responsibly while giving them reliable access to school, work, and essential activities.

Fare-free transit removes a major barrier for students and families. It supports education by ensuring students can get to school consistently and on time, regardless of their family's financial situation. For younger riders, the program also allows parents or guardians to ride along and teach their children how to navigate the bus system safely, building confidence and responsibility at an early age.

Providing free bus transportation for students is an investment in education, independence, and community well-being. It encourages responsible habits, reduces traffic congestion, and supports families across Maui and the state.

I strongly believe that if a student relies on public transit for their education and daily needs, access should be free and accessible. HB1879 helps make that possible, and I respectfully urge you to support this important bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:49:52 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 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

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 2:18:20 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jacob Tesoro-Rarangol	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in full support of a free fare program for our youth on the bus. I know families that take the bus for transportation and I think this will be a great program.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:08:04 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cheri Richards	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

Aloha, I am writing this testimony in favor of bill HB1879. It saddens me to know that our keiki is once again being affected by the mismanagement of our resources. Our keiki are facing many obstacles, such as housing, food security, emotional and physical abuse, amongst other challenges. It is absolutely necessary to alleviate any other stressors for our keiki and their ohana, so we ensure our keiki have access to FREE public transportation. This action is essential for our keiki to focus on academics, get to school, and possibly work.

Mahalo for your consideration of passing this bill.



**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:08:20 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rylee Brooke Kamahele	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

I respectfully support SB2994, which would establish a two-year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on O‘ahu and Kaua‘i for children from birth up to age 19. This bill is an important step toward expanding equitable access to education, community activities, and economic opportunities for our keiki by removing the financial barrier of transit fares.

By investing in free bus and rail access for youth, this program not only helps families with the cost of transportation but also encourages the use of public transit — supporting environmental sustainability goals and fostering healthy, lifelong transportation habits.

Additionally, the bill includes funding for implementation and evaluation and will provide a report with recommendations for future improvements, ensuring the pilot is well-assessed and positioned for meaningful impact.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to pass SB2994 and help make Hawaii’s public transit system more accessible, equitable, and forward-looking for our young people. Mahalo.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:18:16 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I support HB1879 because it incentivizes the youth and parents to use public transportation. By getting more people to ride public transit, we will be normalizing it, reducing traffic congestion, and increasing the safety of students and parents. I urge to legislature to support this bill, so we can move one step closer to a state that walks the walk in pursuit of climate change goals, reduction of vehicle miles traveled, cleaner air, and Vision Zero.

Mahalo,

Jonathan Huynh

A concerned Nanakuli resident

## **Testimony in Support of HB1879 | Keiki Ride Free**

### **Hearing with the House Committee on Transportation**

Tuesday February 3, 2026 at 10:30am in Room 430

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heather McMillen, and I live in Palolo Valley (Honolulu, Oahu). 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.

So many keiki use public transit to commute to school and work. Making it easy to ride public transit by making it free means we are raising a generation of public transit users into the future. My own son took the bus to his public charter school but we had to pay for it as it was not a DOE designated school for free bussing. This bill offers a more equitable and welcoming opportunity for all.

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.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Heather McMillen

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:32:35 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pono Kaakua	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha,

Please support HB1879 and provide all kids in Hawai'i with the ability to take the bus whether or not they have money. I am 15 years old and started riding the bus by myself when I was around 11 years old. Mahalo for allowing me to testify to support Keiki Ride Free.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:41:20 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Andre Johnson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

## Comments:

As a daily TheBus and Skyline rider who is 16 years old I feel as though Youth Mobility is very important. It allows youth who can't drive yet be able to get around independently and freely. Not only does a child being able to get around freely ease up their parents busy schedule, it also instills a sense of community in the child. The cost of living is too high in Hawai'i and it only increases when raising kids. So if Transit was free for youth it would make it more affordable to raise kids and would allow more local families to stay in Hawai'i.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:48:32 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. Free transit for youth would be a win for the climate, would lead to lower congestion on our roads, and help youth build lifelong habits of using public transit. Hawaii County has shown us that free transit works! Mahalo.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:29:00 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mesina DiGrazia-Roberts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mesina. 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.

I am writing as a plaintiff in Navahine v. Hawai’ Department of Transportation; a case which after settling out of court, agreed 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.

Through Navahine v. HDOT, I have sat at the table with government officials. I have seen their signatures at the bottom of documents promising to decarbonize transportation by 2045, and I know that we have the full support of the court over the next 20 years to see our settlement though. This bill is a step toward the future that myself, my fellows, and the Department of Transportation have promised the people of Hawaii.

Many young children I know have found themselves at the beach ready to go home. Without jobs themselves to pay for bus fare, their only option is to call a relative to pick them up in a car. The Keiki Ride Free bill could grant them a way to get home on the bus, succeeding in making their parents' lives easier, decreasing the burden of transportation costs on low income families, and preventing the extra emissions that would have otherwise been used.

I am hoping you will continue to support all efforts aligned with the Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, HDOT released, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies



needed to comply with the settlement agreement. This directly includes the Keiki Ride Free bill as one of these crucial solutions.

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

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 10:40:18 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha to Committee leadership and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB1875. While I do not have children of my own, I support family engagement initiatives at public schools across the state and have seen the many issues and challenges families with children can have. One of these is transporation. Having free access to public transporation will support students and families by providing another reliable transportation option. This could help support student attendance of school and extracurricular activities. Making it free access for all students will also help families that were unaware of or had difficulty navigating the existing reduced or free bus fare programs.

Please support this measure for our keiki and families.

Mahalo nui,

Joan Umi Jensen

Hau‘ula, O‘ahu

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 12:05:28 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kelli Buenconsejo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am support of HB 1879 which will provide fare-free public transportation for youth

## **Testimony in Support of HB1879 | Keiki Ride Free**

Tuesday February 3, 2026 at 10:30am in Room 430

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Vivienne Hill, I live in Aiea, and am a college student at UH Mānoa. 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.

When I was a keiki, the bus was very important in helping me establish independence. Public transit made it possible for me to get to school and back without being dependent on my parent’s work schedule. This freedom allowed me to pursue extracurriculars and afterschool activities that I would’ve been otherwise unable to participate in. For many keiki and their families, especially those that have to balance work, caregiving, and rising costs, affordable public transit would be an immense help.

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.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 3:12:04 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,

As a resident of Kahalu‘u, I write to express my wholehearted support for HB1879, the Keiki Ride Free bill.

This legislation represents a promise kept. The Navahine lawsuit settlement affirmed our keiki’s right to a healthy climate. Free youth fares are a critical step toward reaching zero emissions by 2045. This bill turns the HDOT Energy Security Plan into action.

It also recognizes the daily struggles of Hawai‘i’s families. By eliminating transit fares for youth, we ease household budgets and ensure every child, regardless of background, can reliably get to where they need to be—building a more equitable and connected community.

Ultimately, getting more people onto public transit is the single most effective way to cut the pollution from our largest emissions sector. The results—less traffic, cleaner air, and more resilient infrastructure—benefit every single one of us.

I encourage you to vote yes on this vital measure.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:09:24 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Leilani Kailiawa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, Chair, Vice Chair, and Committee Members,

My name is Leilani Kailiawa. I am a parent and community leader.

I am writing in support of HB1879, which will provide fare-free public transit to youth. This will support youth independence and long-term transit habits, ease pressure on school bus operations, and advance the state's commitment to decarbonizing our transportation system for future generations.

Mahalo nui loa for listening and allowing me to share my support of HB1879

With gratitude

Leilani Kailiawa

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 9:20:51 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cameron Goya Lynde	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1879**

**TO:** Hawaii State House of Representatives

**FROM:** Cameron Goya Lynde

**RE:** HB1879 — Fare-Free Youth Transit (“Keiki Ride Free”)

Aloha House of Representatives,

I write in strong support of HB1879.

Public transit is a public good. It connects our keiki to school, sports, jobs, health care, and community — and it connects families to opportunity. For many households, especially those already stretched by Hawaii’s cost of living, transportation is not a convenience issue. It’s a daily barrier.

HB1879 removes that barrier by making transit free for children and high school youth statewide, regardless of zip code, distance from school, or administrative hurdles. A universal approach matters. Patchwork programs leave families behind. This bill creates clarity, equity, and dignity.

This is also a smart investment in Hawaii’s future. When young people can move safely and affordably without relying on cars, we reduce traffic, cut emissions, and build lifelong habits around shared transportation. That supports our climate goals while improving quality of life right now.

Most importantly, fare-free youth transit affirms something simple: our children deserve access to their own communities. School, practice, work, friends, and care should not depend on whether a family can afford bus fare.

For the sake of affordability, equity, and a healthier Hawaii, I urge you to support HB1879.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,  
Cameron Goya Lynde





**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 5:59:40 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sydney Chen	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

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

My name is Sydney Chen, and I live in Herndon, Virginia. 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. I’m an intern with Our Children’s Trust, a nonprofit public interest law firm, because fighting for young people’s rights to life, liberty and a stable climate is important to me and my generation.

Safe and affordable transportation for youth matters to me because it’s the primary way I can get involved in my community, see my friends, and access my volunteer work. I commuted to Washington, D.C. this past summer to join meetings at the U.S. Congress to support the congressional resolution recognizing children’s rights to a safe climate with Our Children’s Trust. The cost of transportation and the additional coordination with my parents created barriers for me to advocate for my basic rights and to engage in the civic opportunities D.C. offers.

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.

Mahalo,

Sydney

**HB-1879**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:49:30 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/3/2026 10:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
CLifford Russell	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

**Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Members of the Committee,**

**My name is Clifford Russell, and I live in Lahaina. 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.**

**As adult with disabilities who’s family lost their vehicle in the Lahaina wildfires, I still rely on the bus and relied on it as a youth to get from west side to attend UH Maui College in Kahului every weekday, for education and work purposes, and I have to factor in the \$45 dollars per month for a bus pass into my already constrained financial budget. Now imagine having to do the same as a keiki or teen, many of which come from vulnerable communities and families experiencing economic hardship or were affected by the fires like I was, who rely on the bus system to get to school everyday or to travel to the other side.**

**When I worked at Boys and Girls club of Maui Paukukalo club, I witnessed the sad reality that many of my kids were not able to attend club consistently who lived in the Kahului or Wailuku area, because they did not have free dedicated school buses going from their learning institution directly to the club like the others, and given most parents would work late and could not give them a ride, their only fallback the MEO bus proved too much cost overhead for them to use on the regular, as a 6-18 year old. Boys and Girls club is a safety net for many such keiki/young adults in Paukukalo area, to keep them off the streets during after-school hours and provide a third space for them to learn and grow and thrive away from the challenges that often awaited them at home and school life. But you cannot keep these children safe if they have no reliable, free way to get to club consistently, and I would say for every kid who could attend club, from attending community events I could estimate there is probably at least 2 or 3 keiki that could never attend such after-school programs because of lack of free equitable public transportation for keiki.**

**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.**

**Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.**

**Testimony in Support of HB1879 / SB2699 – Keiki Ride Free**  
**Hearing with the Committee on Transportation | February 3 and 10:30 am**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Chapin Fish, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing in solidarity with the 13 youth plaintiffs in *Nawahine v. Hawaii Department of Transportation* to voice my 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.

I wanted to testify in favor of the Keiki ride free bill for two reasons: to stand in solidarity with the 13 plaintiffs in *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation*, and to advocate for my rights to life, liberty and a livable climate system and to fight for the future of youth around the country and world, a future under siege from the perils of climate change.

While interning for the non-profit, public interest law firm Our Children's Trust, I have had the great honor of working alongside and learning from these generational leaders. I am moved by their stories, from flooded highways cutting off schools and jobs, to ecological disruptions undermining farming and fishing practices that these families have relied on for generations. Acidification, warming, and contamination of oceans and freshwater are driving coral reef loss, declining fish populations, damaged kalo fields, and rising sea-level. Climate change is not an abstraction for the *Navahine* plaintiffs, it is a daily reality.

The settlement agreement reached by these brave youths in 2024 represents a chance for the government of Hawai'i to bring justice to its people, to its youth. The Keiki Ride Free bill, in line with the settlement agreement, will help protect cultural practices, safeguard livelihoods for Hawai'i's communities amid accelerating climate impacts.

But I am also here because this bill, by helping decrease carbon emissions in your state, will benefit youth around the world, for climate change is a threat that knows no borders. As a young person from the Northwest, a vulnerable region, I, too, have experienced harms from climate change and fears about my future. My involvement in the climate movement goes back to the summer of 2020, where wildfires led to 15 days of hazardous air quality in my hometown of Portland, Oregon and decimated my state's cherished national beauty. Last summer, I interned at the U.S. Senate to make a direct impact from within my government. I'm here today with Our Children's Trust to continue to fight for my generation, because I felt that I could no longer trust my government to put my interests at the forefront of its decision-making when my generation's lives are at stake.

Transportation costs 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.

By removing fare barriers, this program would significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more. Keiki Ride Free also includes free transit fares for one adult accompanying a child age 12 and under, helping ensure safety and accessibility for younger keiki and caregivers.

It also delivers critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. By shifting trips from private vehicles and rideshare services to public transit, this bill would reduce traffic, lower emissions, improve air quality, and support safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

This legislation directly advances Hawai'i's commitments under the 2024 Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation settlement, which requires the State to achieve a zero-emissions transportation system by 2045.

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

Sincerely,  
Hamilton Chapin Fish