



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

Date: 02/05/2026

Time: 02:00 PM

Location: 309 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Committee: EDN

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB2179, RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to develop and administer a Traffic Safety Program. Expands the Department of Education's Traffic Safety Education program to include electric bicycles.

Department's Position: Comments

The Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) recognizes HB 2179 and the importance of electric bicycle safety. The Department respectfully offers comments.

The Hawai'i Bicycling League (HBL) has educational materials, printed and a six (6) part video series, readily available on their website that specifically address low-speed electric bicycles. HBL has shared these resources with Kaua'i Path and Maui Bicycling League which are distributing these resources on their respective islands. HBL also has an e-bike presentation that is ready for any audience and has coordinated presentations at schools with the Honolulu Police Department (HPD).

The Department can join the educational efforts of the HBL and the HPD in disseminating their resources to Department schools statewide.

HB-2179

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:28:52 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire	Ohana Unity Party & Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

****Aloha Chair and Honorable Members of the Committees,****

As Chairman of the Ohana Unity Party and a lifelong advocate for the protection of Hawaii's keiki, the restoration of 'ohana values, and the dismantling of systems that allow neglect, abuse, or exploitation of our children and youth, I submit this written testimony in the strongest possible support of ****House Bill 2181****. This vital legislation establishes an independent statewide Office of the Ombudsman for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice—an impartial, external guardian dedicated to investigating complaints, monitoring agency performance, and ensuring that every child in state care or custody receives safety, dignity, fairness, and justice. HB2181 creates an autonomous Office of the Ombudsman for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, with comprehensive authority to: - Receive and investigate confidential complaints from children, youth, families, foster parents, staff, and concerned citizens regarding treatment, placement decisions, safety concerns, delays in services, abuse, neglect, retaliation, or violations of rights within Child Welfare Services (DHS), Juvenile Justice (DOCR/Judiciary), and related state agencies; - Conduct unannounced site visits to foster homes, group homes, shelters, detention facilities, and other child-serving settings; - Access all relevant records, conduct private interviews with children and youth, and issue public reports with findings, recommendations, and timelines for corrective action; - Recommend policy changes, training improvements, personnel actions, or legislative reforms; - Submit annual reports to the Legislature, Governor, and public, identifying systemic issues, patterns of concern, and progress on prior recommendations. This office is not duplicative of existing internal mechanisms—it provides true independence, free from agency influence, retaliation, or conflict of interest, which is essential for credible oversight.

****Why I Stand Strongly in Support of HB2181****

1. ****Hawaii's Children and Youth Face Unacceptable Risks and Systemic Gaps**** Our state continues to struggle with serious deficiencies in child welfare and juvenile justice: - Native Hawaiian children are disproportionately represented in foster care (over 50% of placements despite being ~20% of the child population). - The average age of first sexual exploitation in trafficking cases is 11, with documented cases as young as 4 on the Big Island. - 64% of identified trafficking survivors are Native Hawaiian. - 75% of trafficking victims are homeless at the time of exploitation. - 23% of child trafficking victims are exploited by family members. - Persistent reports of delayed investigations, inappropriate placements, inadequate mental health

services, and retaliation against youth or families who speak out. - Recent multi-agency operations (e.g., “Shine the Light,” January 2026) recovered 8 at-risk teens on Oahu—highlighting ongoing vulnerabilities that require stronger, independent oversight. These are not isolated failures—they are symptoms of a system that lacks external, fearless accountability. HB2181 fills this critical gap.

2. ****Alignment with Aloha, Pono, and Our Kuleana to Protect Keiki**** The Dalai Lama teaches: “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” Mahatma Gandhi reminds us: “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” HB2181 embodies these eternal truths by giving our keiki and their ‘ohana an independent, trusted voice when agencies fall short. In a state where Native Hawaiian children face disproportionate removal, trauma, and exploitation, this office is an act of pono—restoring balance, protecting innocence, and fulfilling our kuleana to future generations.

3. ****Real-World Example: The Urgent Need for Independent Advocacy**** The Epstein files revealed how systemic failures allow powerful networks to exploit vulnerable youth, including those in foster care. Hawaii faces parallel risks: foster system vulnerabilities, trafficking through tourism and online platforms, and lack of centralized, independent accountability. Without an external Ombudsman, complaints are often handled internally—delayed, minimized, or dismissed. HB2181 changes this: It creates a dedicated, independent advocate who can investigate patterns of neglect or abuse, intervene early in high-risk cases, and drive systemic reforms—ensuring no child is left voiceless or unprotected.

4. ****Fiscal and Long-Term Community Benefits**** Independent child advocacy offices in other jurisdictions (e.g., Washington, Oregon, New York) reduce costly litigation, prevent escalation of harm, identify systemic waste early, and improve outcomes for children—leading to lower long-term social service and corrections costs. In Hawaii, where child welfare and juvenile justice spending is substantial and Native Hawaiian overrepresentation is so stark, this office will deliver measurable savings and better life outcomes through early intervention and accountability.

5. ****Support for Native Hawaiian and Marginalized Keiki**** Native Hawaiian children are overrepresented in foster care, juvenile justice, and trafficking statistics. HB2181 ensures the Ombudsman office includes cultural expertise, prioritizes culturally appropriate services, and focuses on family reunification and community healing—honoring our ancestral values of aloha ‘āina and kākou. This bill is a step toward breaking generational cycles of trauma and safeguarding our future.

****Conclusion and Urgent Call to Action**** HB2181 is urgent, necessary, and long overdue. It will give our keiki an independent voice, hold agencies accountable, prevent exploitation and neglect, and restore trust in systems meant to protect them. Guided by the profound wisdom of the Dalai Lama and Mahatma Gandhi, let us embrace compassion and justice—establish this statewide Office of the Independent Ombudsman for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice and demonstrate that Hawaii puts its children first.

Mahalo nui loa for your consideration and service to our islands. I am available for questions or oral testimony if needed. In solidarity for our keiki, justice, and ohana,

Master Shelby "Pikachu" Billionaire, HRM Kingdom of The Hawaiian Islands, H.I. Ohana Unity Party, Chairman www.Ohanaunityparty.com Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com \

HB-2179

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:48:41 PM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

I support HB2179 because everyone, including the youth, should understand how to safely use an electric bicycle. This bill is a common-sense piece of legislation that begins the step of educating the public on electric bikes. I further propose that all drivers be required to learn about electric bikes and then be tested prior to being licensed.

Mahalo,

Jonathan Huynh

HB-2179

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 8:41:31 AM

Testimony for EDN on 2/5/2026 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Terri Yoshinaga	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill.