

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

**Testimony COMMENTING on H.B. 1523, H.D. 1
RELATING TO THE STATEWIDE TRAFFIC CODE**

SENATOR LORRAINE R. INOUE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing Date: March 17, 2026
3:00 PM

Room Number: Conference Room 229
via Videoconference

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (DOH) provides comments on House Bill
3 1523, House Draft 1 (H.B. 1523, H.D. 1), which removes references to countdown timers as it
4 relates to pedestrian-control signals including the requirement that pedestrians must begin
5 crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.

6 **Department Testimony:** This measure represents a practical and essential modernization of
7 Hawaii's traffic laws by removing unnecessarily burdensome regulations that prioritize technical
8 compliance over actual public safety. Currently, HRS §291C-33 prohibits pedestrians from
9 entering a crosswalk once a countdown timer has begun, a rule that accounts for approximately
10 46 percent of pedestrian citations.¹ This allows for the issuance of \$130 "jaywalking" tickets to
11 individuals who are behaving reasonably and have ample time to reach the other side of the
12 street safely. Rather than promoting safety, these overly technical regulations criminalize
13 ordinary behavior and turn informational safety tools into enforcement traps. By treating the

¹ Seitz A. Freedom to walk: decriminalizing jaywalking and shifting investment towards safe, accessible pedestrian infrastructure. Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice. March 2024. Accessed February 10, 2026. <https://hiappleseed.org/publications/freedom-to-walk>

1 countdown as a strict "do not enter" signal, the current law fails to provide pedestrians with the
2 data needed to make informed decisions based on their own walking speed and mobility needs.

3 Removing these barriers would increase safe access to physical activity and support
4 public health. Despite Hawaii's favorable climate, geography, and reputation for active outdoor
5 living, only 33% of adult and 18% of high school students in Hawaii met federal guidelines for
6 physical activity.^{2,3} A community's built environment can either promote or hinder this activity;
7 by decriminalizing the act of entering a crosswalk during a countdown, we create a more
8 accessible and walkable environment that supports those at risk for chronic diseases such as
9 obesity and heart disease. Aligning our statutes with best practices such as in San Francisco⁴
10 ensures that our infrastructure serves its intended purpose: to facilitate safe, efficient, and
11 equitable movement for all residents, including seniors and those with disabilities, without the
12 threat of avoidable and punitive citations.

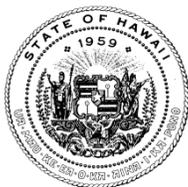
13 **Offered Amendments:** None

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

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

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

⁴ City and County of San Francisco. Pedestrian signals. SF Better Streets. 2025. Accessed February 10, 2026. <https://sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/pedestrian-safety-and-traffic-calming/pedestrian-sig...>



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

LATE

Tuesday, March 17, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, 229

**HB1523, HD1
RELATING TO STATEWIDE TRAFFIC CODE**

Senate Committee on Transportation

The Hawaii Department of Transportation (HDOT) opposes HB1523, HD1.

This bill amends Section 291C-33 of the Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) to remove references to countdown timers as it relates to pedestrian-control signals, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins. The existing language in Section 291C-33 of the HRS regarding pedestrian countdown timers provides clarity by establishing that a pedestrian shall finish crossing a roadway but shall not begin crossing a roadway during the countdown. Eliminating references to countdown timers may result in pedestrians being unsure of their responsibilities in a crosswalk that operates a pedestrian-control signal with countdown timer.

HDOT understands that under the changes H.B. No. 1523 proposes, pedestrians would still be prohibited from crossing a roadway during the countdown, which coincides with flashing the "Don't Walk" or "Upraised Palm" signal. However, HDOT would oppose the intent of this bill if it is to permit pedestrians to begin crossing during this phase for the following reasons:

- Allowing pedestrians to start to cross a roadway during the countdown would introduce the potential for pedestrians to make individual decisions that create unpredictable situations. This unpredictability could disrupt safety and efficiency, leaving other road users to navigate scenarios they may not anticipate but remain responsible for.
- Pedestrians crossing the street against nationally established traffic control devices and contrary to other road user expectations would be challenging especially for children and elderly persons, our most vulnerable road users. A pedestrian may mistakenly believe it is safe to cross the roadway, or dart in front of a turning vehicle as they rush to cross the street before conflicting vehicular

traffic proceeds. Such decisions force drivers into sudden, unanticipated situations that could have devastating consequences.

There were 148 pedestrian fatalities and 495 serious injuries from 2021 through 2025, using preliminary data for 2025. Pedestrians aged 17 and younger or aged 65 and older were involved in 42 percent of pedestrian fatalities and 34 percent of pedestrian serious injuries. Overall, pedestrians accounted for 28 percent all traffic fatalities and 20 percent of all serious injuries during this period. Ensuring predictability for all roadway users is essential for safe interactions between pedestrians and vehicles, and advancing the State's goal of eliminating traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.



Testimony in Support for HB1523 - Relating to the Statewide Traffic Code
Committee on Transportation (TRS)
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 3:00PM

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the TRS committee, Mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in STRONG SUPPORT of HB1523**, which would amend Section 291C-33, Hawaii Revised Statutes, would remove reference to countdown timers, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.

HB1523 represents a practical and important step toward reducing unnecessarily burdensome pedestrian regulations that do not improve safety and instead contribute to confusing rules and avoidable citations. As Hawai'i Appleseed's research demonstrates, Hawai'i relies heavily on pedestrian enforcement—issuing more than 30,000 jaywalking-related citations between 2018 and 2023—without evidence that this approach reduces pedestrian injuries or fatalities.¹

Roughly 46 percent of these citations were given for violating HRS§291C-33,² which prohibits pedestrians from crossing on the Don't Walk Sign or against the Countdown Timer. Under these laws, **pedestrians can receive a \$130 jaywalking ticket for crossing the street after the countdown timer has started**, even if they have ample time to cross. Rather than promoting safety, these overly technical pedestrian regulations criminalize ordinary, reasonable behavior.

Pedestrian countdown signals were not designed to prohibit people from entering a crosswalk once the countdown begins. According to national best practices, including guidance used by cities like San Francisco, countdown timers exist to provide pedestrians with additional information—specifically, how much time remains to safely cross the street.³ These signals help people make informed decisions based on their walking speed, mobility needs, and comfort level. Treating the countdown as a strict “do not enter” signal misinterprets its purpose and turns a safety tool into an enforcement trap.

This misinterpretation disproportionately impacts seniors, people with disabilities, parents with children, and others who may need more time to cross. It also increases the likelihood that pedestrians will rush into crossings or avoid signalized intersections altogether—outcomes that undermine, rather than enhance, safety.

¹ Seitz, A, “Freedom to Walk: Decriminalizing Jaywalking and Shifting Investment Towards Safe, Accessible Pedestrian Infrastructure,” Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, March, 2024.
<https://hiappleseed.org/publications/freedom-to-walk>.

² Ibid.

³ City and County of San Francisco, “Pedestrian Signals,” sbetterstreets, 2025.
<https://sbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/pedestrian-safety-and-traffic-calming/pedestrian-signals/index.html>.

In summary, Hawai'i Appleseed urges the Legislature to support HB1523 as a commonsense reform that improves clarity, fairness, and safety for people walking in Hawai'i. Reducing unnecessary pedestrian regulations is a critical step toward streets that work for everyone.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Transportation

March 17, 2026 at 3:00PM

Conference Room 229

HB 1523 HD 1

Relating to Transportation

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Committee Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB 1523 HD 1**, which removes references to countdown timers as it relates to pedestrian-control signals, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.

This bill is consistent with several goals of the Oahu Regional Transportation Plan including support for active and public transportation, promoting an equitable transportation system, and improving air quality and protecting environmental and cultural assets.¹ Removing the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins, makes walking a less hostile form of transportation encourages more people to walk or roll to their destination.

Although the law that makes it illegal for pedestrians to step into the street once the timer starts counting down was passed to improve pedestrian safety, pedestrian deaths have increased since the law's passing. In 2025, Hawai'i road deaths hit an 18-year peak, with a spike in pedestrian and motorcycle deaths contributing to the more than 20% increase in deaths compared to 2024.²

The Federal Highway Administration lists proven safety countermeasures that have shown to reduce pedestrian crashes, hospitalizations, and deaths.³ Some examples include pedestrian medians or refuges, road diets, leading pedestrian intervals, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons. In addition to passing this law, proven safety countermeasures can be implemented systemically to truly improve pedestrian safety.

¹ https://oahumpo.org/?wpfb_dl=2215

² <https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/01/2025-hawaii-road-deaths-hit-18-year-peak/#:~:text=The%20state's%202025%20road%20fatalities%20included%3A&text=38%20pedestrians,5%20other%20non%20occupant%20fatalities>

³ [Proven Safety Countermeasures | FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

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](#)).

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



HIPHI Board

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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: March 16, 2026

To: Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation

RE: Support for HB 1523 HD1, Relating to the Statewide Traffic Code

Hrg: March 17, 2026 at 3:00 PM in Conference Room 229

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating + Active Living² (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **support of HB 1523 HD1**, which indicates the permitted actions at crosswalks.

This bill takes an important step toward allowing pedestrians freedom to safely cross at designated crosswalks regardless of time remaining during the walk cycle.

Removing Timers Increases Safety and Promotes Active Lifestyles

Removing the language surrounding the use of the countdown timers at designated crosswalks allows pedestrians to utilize the entire walk cycle to cross the street safely and efficiently. Additionally, following the direction of the simple walk/don't walk designations streamlines decision making for the pedestrian. Removing the need to calculate the time to cross for pedestrians can help increase safe actions.

Drivers Show Decreased Speeds Without Timers

Removing timers also provides clear direction to motorists to maintain a holding pattern as they may use the timers to anticipate signal changes, either accelerating to clear an intersection or gauging whether they can safely proceed.³ Decreased vehicle speed in intersections can help reduce collisions, providing increased safety for all pedestrians.

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

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

³ Safe Systems Solutions.(2025, January 21). *Safe System Snippet 411: Pedestrian countdown timers – benefits and challenges*. <https://safesystemsolutions.com.au/safe-system-snippet-411-pedestrian-countdown-timer-s-benefits-and-challenges/>



This change to the statewide traffic code will allow pedestrians to move freely and safely across the street at any time during the walk cycle to access vital services, employment, and recreational opportunities.

HIPHI and the HEAL coalition support HB 1523 HD1 and respectfully ask the committee to pass this measure.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patti Hatzistavrakis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patti Hatzistavrakis
Active Transportation Specialist



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

PHONE
808-735-5756

EMAIL
bicycle@hbl.org

SENATE COMMITTEE TRANSPORTATION
Tuesday - March, 17, 2026 - 3:00PM

Hawai'i Bicycling League Supports HB 1523, HD1, Relating to Statewide Traffic Code

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, 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 supports HB 1523, HD1 which would amend Section 291C-33, HRS and remove reference to countdown timers, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.

Given that 2025 was one of the deadliest years in decades on Hawai'i roads, it is imperative to take bold action to influence public behavior change and raise awareness about road safety for all road users, especially vulnerable users, including pedestrians. This is aligned with Vision Zero principles which have been adopted by the State and the Counties. It also supports creating walkable communities and Honolulu's 2026 Charter Amendment for a more bike- and pedestrian-friendly city.

HB1523, HD1 represents a practical and important step toward reducing unnecessarily burdensome pedestrian regulations that do not improve safety and instead contribute to confusing rules and avoidable citations. Pedestrian countdown signals were not designed to prohibit people from entering a crosswalk once the countdown begins. According to national best practices, including guidance used by cities like San Francisco, countdown timers exist to provide pedestrians with additional information – specifically, how much time remains to cross the street.¹

HBL urges you to support this bill as a common sense reform that improves clarity, fairness, and safety for pedestrians. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

S/Eduardo Hernandez

Eduardo Hernandez
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Bicycling League

¹ City and County of San Francisco, "Pedestrian Signals," sfbetterstreets, 2025.

<https://sfbetterstreets.org/find-project-types/pedestrian-safety-and-traffic-calming/pedestrian-signals/index.html>

HB-1523-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2026 8:25:26 PM

Testimony for TRS on 3/17/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Lorna Holmes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I write in support of changing the present 'booby-trap' requirement to enter the crosswalk before the countdown to the reasonable and obvious one of finishing crossing by the end of the countdown. The normal meaning of a blinking light is 'proceed with caution', and the countdown clearly implies that we are being cautioned as to how much time we have to get across the street. Giving expensive tickets for entering during the countdown is basically entrapment. Many pedestrians are walking because that is the only form of transportation they have, and it is an unfair burden to fine them for this non-offense. Please do pass this bill.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Dr. Lorna Holmes, Mo'ili'ili 96826

HB-1523-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 4:41:20 PM

Testimony for TRS on 3/17/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
JONATHAN LOTT	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support this bill. In Waikiki, virtually NOBODY stops at the curb and waits for the next "pedestrian go signal" to cross the street once the countdown starts. Very few even know (including locals) that to start crossing during the countdown is currently illegal, and there is zero enforcement anyway! I understand the intent was to cut down on people waiting too late and ending up still in the street ahead of the vehicles when the vehicles have a green signal. Maybe they might learn to hurry up or better judge their crossing time if they almost win a Darwin Award!

Jon Lott--pedestrian, cyclist, driver in Waikiki

HB-1523-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 6:37:20 PM

Testimony for TRS on 3/17/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

I support HB1523 HD1, which corrects a misinterpretation of pedestrian countdown timer functionality to align with national best practices. I believe this bill will improve safety and clarity for all road users.

The bill represents an important step toward creating more walkable communities and supporting Vision Zero goals by removing unnecessary regulatory burdens that don't improve safety. As Hawai'i addresses roadway safety challenges, it's crucial that our traffic laws reflect evidence-based practices rather than misconceptions about traffic engineering.

HB1523 will:

- Align Hawaii with national best practices for pedestrian signal timing.
- Reduce confusion for pedestrians using countdown signals.
- Prevent unjust citations for appropriate pedestrian behavior.
- Support more pedestrian-friendly communities.
- Improve clarity and fairness in our traffic code.

I recommend several amendments to strengthen this important legislation:

1. Add educational requirements to ensure pedestrians and drivers understand proper countdown timer usage
2. Mandate data collection to measure the bill's impact on pedestrian safety and behavior

This bill represents common-sense reform that removes unnecessary burdens while maintaining pedestrian safety. By aligning with national best practices, Hawaii can create clearer, more effective regulations that support our multimodal transportation goals.

I respectfully urge your support of HB1523 HD1 with these amendments.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-1523-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/15/2026 9:30:18 AM

Testimony for TRS on 3/17/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

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

I am testifying in **strong support** of HB1523, which removes the unreasonable requirement that a pedestrian must begin crossing a roadway *before* a countdown signal begins. This common-sense change modernizes our traffic code to reflect how people actually walk and removes a trap that currently allows for a \$130 fine for a harmless action.

The data shows this punitive approach is not working. Hawai'i issues thousands of these tickets annually without corresponding improvements in pedestrian safety. The law, as written, prioritizes technical compliance over the real-world goal of allowing people to cross the street safely and completely.

This bill aligns with the national movement toward "safe crossing" laws and removes an arbitrary and confusing rule that serves primarily as a revenue source, not a safety measure.

I urge you to pass HB1523 to make our streets more logical, more humane, and ultimately safer for everyone.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Dear Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kiana Otsuka, and I am a Transportation Planner whose expertise is in walk, roll, bike, and transit. I am writing testimony in **strong support of HB1523 HD1**, which removes references to countdown timers as it relates to pedestrian-control signals, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.

I am excited to see the legislature consider this bill because current statutes relating to pedestrians are needlessly restrictive and disproportionately impact people who do not drive and those who primarily rely upon walking as a means of transportation. These people are often low-income and walk out of necessity, as owning and operating a vehicle is prohibitively expensive.

I wanted to share with the committee an experience I had while living in Los Angeles to go to college. I was trying to cross the street at a traffic signal to go to an internship interview, however, the cars turning right, who were supposed to make a complete stop on red before turning, did not stop. The fourth vehicle finally stopped for me to cross, but that means I entered the crosswalk when the countdown timer had already begun. I had to cross 8 lanes of traffic, and when I finally got to the last lane (the countdown timer indicated I still had time to cross), I was almost hit by a police vehicle who also ignored the right turn on red, after a complete stop. The police officer then wrote me a ticket for \$150, money that I did not have at the time because I was still looking for a paid internship. This severely impacted my finances at the time, and also made me afraid to walk (I did not have a car in Los Angeles and relied on walking, biking, and using the bus).

Pedestrian enforcement and our current transportation system are not effective at improving pedestrian safety. Hawai'i road deaths hit an 18-year peak, with a spike in pedestrian and motorcycle deaths contributing to the more than 20% increase in deaths compared to 2024¹. If we truly care about improving pedestrian safety, we need to change the way we allocate our budgets to fund projects that improve pedestrian safety and design our transportation facilities to reduce vehicle speed. The Federal Highway Administration has a great resource that includes proven safety countermeasures that Hawai'i could implement to see a substantial decrease in pedestrian crashes, hospitalizations, and deaths.² Some examples include implementing pedestrian medians or refuges, road diets, leading pedestrian intervals, and rectangular rapid flashing beacons.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important measure that will help to improve mobility justice and reduce the unnecessary pretextual stops, potential for escalation, and therefore incarceration and burden on the justice system. The State of Hawai'i must remove

1

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/01/2025-hawaii-road-deaths-hit-18-year-peak/#:~:text=The%20state's%202025%20road%20fatalities%20included%3A&text=38%20pedestrians,5%20other%20non%2Doccupant%20fatalities>

² [Proven Safety Countermeasures | FHWA \(dot.gov\)](#)

restrictive pedestrian laws from its criminal code and shift the responsibility of safety from people walking and rolling to systems, policies, planning and design. This will reduce traffic violence which has seen a dramatic recent increase, and prevent the disparate policing of people walking. There are proven safety countermeasures to improve pedestrian safety that the State and Counties may better spend our time, resources, and budget, including tax payer dollars, that will help to save lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Mahalo,
Kiana Otsuka

LATE

HB-1523-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 9:56:59 AM

Testimony for TRS on 3/17/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

RE: HB1523 HD1

Aloha mai,

This Bill removes the 'countdown Timer Requirement" rule that pedestrians must start crossing before the countdown timer begins. It also stops using the countdown as a legal reference for signal violations. Thus, this is good public policy for the safety and protection of all, but especially for our Kūpuna.

Mahalo

John A H Tomoso+, MSW, ACSW

51 Ku'ula st., Kahului, HI 96732-2906

john.a.h.tomoso@gmail.com