



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

Thursday, February 19, 2026
9:00 a.m.
State Capitol, 430

HB1696
RELATING TO COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES

House Committee on Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports H.B. 1696, which seeks to lower the minimum age for obtaining a commercial driver's license from twenty-one to eighteen years of age, repeals the requirement that a person only operate category 3 vehicles to qualify for a commercial license, and requires the Department of Transportation to amend its rules accordingly.

This legislation aligns with the DOT's commitment to balancing workforce development needs with public safety. By lowering the qualifying age to eighteen, the bill enables more young drivers to enter the commercial transportation sector earlier, addressing potential labor shortages in the industry while ensuring that all drivers meet rigorous federal and state standards. As stated in Section 1 of the bill, persons must still comply with Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations part 390–396, subpart B, except section 391.11(b)(1), in the case of intrastate drivers involved in intrastate commerce. This ensures that even younger drivers are held to high federal safety standards.

Additionally, the removal of the category 3 vehicle restriction allows for greater flexibility in hiring and training, particularly for drivers who may be transitioning into commercial driving roles. The bill also includes important safety safeguards, such as requiring drivers to have held a category 3 state driver's license for the two years prior to driving commercially, and prohibiting those with certain traffic convictions—including speeding excessively, reckless driving, or unsafe lane changes—from operating commercial vehicles. These provisions help maintain accountability and reduce risk.

To ensure state compliance with the under 21 CDL, the DOT recommends amending HRS 286-236(a)(1) and adding subsection (i) with the following language below:

HRS 286-236(a)(1):

- (a) No person shall be issued a commercial driver's license unless that person:
- (1) Meets the qualification standards of title 49 Code of Federal Regulations, part 391, subparts B and E; provided that for issuance of a commercial driver's license to an

applicant who is eighteen years of age or older but under twenty-one years of age, compliance with title 49 Code of Federal Regulations section 391.11(b)(1) (minimum age) shall not be required if the license is restricted to intrastate operation pursuant to subsection (i);

HRS 286-236(i):

(i) Intrastate licenses for applicants under twenty-one. Notwithstanding subsection (a)(1) and title 49 Code of Federal Regulations section 391.11(b)(1), the examiner of drivers may issue a commercial driver's license to a person who is eighteen years of age or older but under twenty-one years of age if:

(1) The license bears the "K" restriction indicating operation is limited to intrastate commerce, as described in section 286-239(b)(9);

(2) The applicant meets all other state and federal requirements applicable to the license class and endorsements sought, including medical certification (49 C.F.R. part 391), entry-level driver training (49 C.F.R. part 380), knowledge and skills testing (49 C.F.R. part 383), and controlled substances and alcohol use and testing (49 C.F.R. part 382); and

A license issued under this subsection shall not authorize operation in interstate commerce.

The DOT supports this legislative effort because it promotes a more inclusive and responsive approach to workforce development without compromising safety. The proposed changes reflect modern industry demands and provide a pathway for qualified individuals to contribute to Hawaii's transportation infrastructure.

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

DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE KUPA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

ADMINISTRATION

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February 18, 2026

The Honorable Darius K. Kila, Chair
The Honorable Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
and Members of the House Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Conference Room 430
415 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

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

SUBJECT: H.B. No. 1696 - Relating To Commercial Driver's Licenses
HEARING: Thursday, February 19, 2026, 9:00 a.m.

The City and County of Honolulu, Department of Customer Services (CSD) respectfully offers testimony in **support** of H.B. No. 1696 for your committee's consideration. Pursuant to Section 6-402 of the Revised Charter of the City and County of Honolulu, CSD Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) administers the motor vehicle commercial driver's licensing program for the island of O'ahu.

CSD supports this measure because it provides a meaningful opportunity to strengthen Hawai'i's workforce while maintaining appropriate licensing standards. Lowering the minimum age for an intrastate commercial driver's license to eighteen years of age expands the pool of eligible drivers at a time when many industries are experiencing persistent workforce shortages.

This bill also creates earlier access to structured training and supervised commercial driving experience. Allowing qualified young adults to enter the commercial driving field sooner supports career development, skill-building, and long-term workforce retention. For many residents, commercial driving offers a stable career path with competitive wages and opportunities for advancement.

Testimony for H.B. No. 1696
February 18, 2026
Page 2

From an administrative perspective, aligning state law with federal intrastate allowances provides clarity and consistency in licensing requirements. With appropriate safeguards in place, this measure supports workforce development goals while preserving public safety and regulatory oversight.

For these reasons, the Department of Customer Services **supports** H.B. No. 1696.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. No. 1696.

Sincerely,

for Kimberly M. Hashiro
Director



**TESTIMONY OF TINA YAMAKI, MANAGING DIRECTOR
HAWAII TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION
FEBRUARY 19, 2026
HB 1696 RELATING TO COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES.**

Aloha Kila and members of the House Committee on Transportation. I am Tina Yamaki, Managing Director of the Hawaii Transportation Association and I appreciate this opportunity to testify.

The Hawaii Transportation Association (HTA Hawaii) was founded in 1938 and incorporated in 1963, and is a private, non-profit trade organization dedicated to the service and assistance to the commercial ground transportation industry in the State of Hawaii. Our members include family owned small and medium sized businesses, independent owner operators, and national motor carriers range from delivery services to passenger carriers - as well as allied industry partners.

HTA Hawaii strongly supports HB 1696. This measure lowers the age of who may drive commercially within the State from nineteen to eighteen; repeals the requirement that a person only operates category 3 vehicles to qualify to drive commercially in the State; and requires the Department of Transportation to amend its rules to lower the minimum age required for a commercial driver's license.

By lowering the minimum age to eighteen aligns commercial driving eligibility with the age of legal adulthood and high school graduation. This creates a direct workforce pathway for recent graduates, including those completing vocational or technical education programs. Establishing an earlier entry point strengthens the commercial driver pipeline at a time when Hawai'i, like much of the country, continues to experience driver shortages.

We suggest that there be added language that those who are between the ages of 18-20 years old have the companies that employ them train them for an additional minimum of 320 hours as well as keeping record of the training.

In addition, commercial drivers are essential to the movement of goods throughout the State, including food, construction materials, fuel, and medical supplies. Expanding eligibility increases the available labor pool, helping stabilize supply chains, reduce delivery delays, and control transportation-related costs that ultimately affect consumers statewide.

We also want to point out that by requiring the Department of Transportation to amend its rules ensures statutory alignment and administrative clarity. Removing the limitation that only Category 3 vehicles qualify for in-state commercial operation modernizes the framework and eliminates unnecessary barriers that restrict opportunity without clear safety justification.

Furthermore, by allowing eighteen-year-olds to begin commercial driving careers within Hawai'i encourages young residents to remain in the State rather than seek employment opportunities elsewhere. Early career entry promotes skill development, income stability, and long-term employment in a critical industry.

Commercial driving also remains subject to licensing standards, testing requirements, medical certification, and applicable safety regulations. Lowering the age does not eliminate oversight; it simply expands eligibility to qualified individuals who meet existing commercial driver licensing requirements.

Many locally owned trucking, delivery, construction, and transportation companies face workforce constraints. Expanding eligibility helps these businesses recruit and train new drivers, improving operational continuity and competitiveness.

This measure represents a practical workforce solution that strengthens Hawai'i's transportation infrastructure, supports economic resilience, and removes outdated barriers while maintaining regulatory safeguards.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 2:30:07 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Genaro Hale Gualdarama | Hawaii Teamsters Local 996 | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

In support of bill HB1696.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 2:54:49 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jonathan Makue | Local 996 | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha,

I Jonathan Makue support this bill.

Mahalo,

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 2:59:20 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kevin K. Holu | Hawaii Teamsters 996 | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Hawaii Teamsters Local 996 strongly SUPPORTS HB1696. We are shortage of CDL drivers across the state we need to fill these empty positions and keep our people working.



Hawai'i State House of Representatives

Committee on Transportation

HB1696 – Relating to Commercial Driver's Licenses

RE: Support for HB1696

February 19, 2026

Hawaiian Council writes in support for HB1696, which would lower barriers to workforce development for critical infrastructure to our islands.

Hawaiian Council is a 501(c)3 member-based non-profit committed to advancing the cultural, economic, and community development of Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians, with a focus on economic development by advancing self-sufficiency. One of our flagship programs, the Hawaiian Trades Academy (HTA), focuses on creating pathways to economic empowerment and uplifting the state by equipping students with the tools and training necessary to achieve financial resilience and success. Since its inception in 2019, we have served over 1,000 graduates across multiple trades, including CDL-A Licensing.

Lowering the CDL license age would create meaningful opportunities for young adults while helping address the nationwide truck driver shortage that affects supply chains and local businesses. For years, every island has faced a shortage of truck drivers, bus drivers, and other CDL licensed workers. Allowing qualified, well-trained younger drivers to obtain a CDL earlier—under strict safety standards, graduated licensing requirements, and enhanced training programs—would open doors to stable, well-paying careers without requiring a four-year degree. This bill would strengthen workforce development, support economic growth, and provide a structured pathway into a critical industry, without disregarding safety as the top priority.

For these reasons, Hawaiian Council urges this committee to pass HB1696. Mahalo for your commitment to economic development and workforce development.

Mālama pono,

Madelyn McKeague

Director of Advocacy, Hawaiian Council

HAWAIIANS ADVANCING HAWAI'I

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HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 12:34:55 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jowell Rivera | Hawaii Logistic Services | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

As a long time operating transportation company. We support this bill 100%. With the driver shortage in Hawaii, we need more qualified drivers as ALL goods are moved via trucks or other forms of road transportation. Products such as food, medical supplies and fuel are needed in everyday lives of the Hawaii people.

This bill makes sense and has a good point of safety and needed training to support our younger people that allows for an above average income in Hawaii.

Please pass this bill without delay.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 9:24:30 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Johnnie-Mae L. Perry | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support

1696 HB RELATING TO COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSES.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 12:44:02 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tessy Kekahuna | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

In support

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:26:16 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mike Ortiz | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am in support of the bill. There is a huge need for more cdl drivers & many kids today especially from Hawaii don't have the means for a college education and the competition for other trades are excessive. Having the training & knowledge of being a Commercial driver allows for young adults to acquire a trade that they can earn an income while trying to find their path and is always something they can fall back on. They will always be able find work.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:38:18 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| David Souza | island Topsoil, LLC | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is David Souza owner of Island Topsoil, LLC and I am a resident of Waianae and operate on multiple islands. I am an owner of a Trucking company and a General Contractor. I am writing today in strong support of Bill HB1696 which would lower the minimum age for obtaining a Commercial Driver’s License from 21 to 19.

Our state, like much of the nation, is facing a significant shortage of qualified commercial drivers. This shortage impacts local businesses, agriculture, construction, and supply chains. By maintaining the age requirement at 21, we unintentionally create a gap that prevents motivated young adults from entering a high-demand, well-paying career at a critical time in their lives.

At 19 years old, individuals are legally permitted to vote, serve in the armed forces, and take on many forms of employment that carry significant responsibility. It is inconsistent to suggest they are capable of defending our country but not capable of operating a commercial vehicle—particularly when proper training and safety standards are in place.

Lowering the CDL age to 19 would:

- Create a stronger workforce pipeline
- Help reduce driver shortages
- Provide stable, middle-class career opportunities for young adults who may not pursue a four-year college degree
- Strengthen our state’s economy

Importantly, safety must remain a top priority. This bill can ensure strict training requirements, graduated licensing provisions, and compliance with federal safety standards. With structured training and oversight, 19-year-old drivers can meet the same professional standards as older drivers.

This legislation is about opportunity, economic growth, and responsible workforce development. I respectfully urge this committee to vote in favor of Bill HB1696

Thank you for your time and consideration.

David Souza

Island Topsoil, LLC

808-321-9604

dsouza@islandtopsoil.com

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 9:17:42 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jonathan Reed | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I believe that lowering the age for a CDL will benefit everyone, especially young adults who have chosen a career as a commercial driver.

HB-1696

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 10:06:02 AM

Testimony for TRN on 2/19/2026 9:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tanya Kaahaaina | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I believe changing the age would help tremendously.