



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

Date: 03/18/2026

Time: 01:00 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: EDU

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: HB1780, HD1, RELATING TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION.

Purpose of Bill: Requires the Department of Education to establish a student bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students who meet certain statutory requirements. Requires reports to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

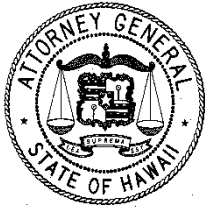
Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) appreciates the opportunity to express its concerns on HB1780, HD1, which would require the establishment of a bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students who meet certain statutory requirements and prioritizes these students for available seats. While the Department supports the Legislature's commitment to improving equitable access to student transportation, several operational considerations remain that warrant further discussion.

The Department recognizes the intent of HB1780, HD1 to reduce transportation barriers for economically disadvantaged students. Prioritizing bus seats strictly based on free- or reduced-price meal eligibility presents potential equity challenges. Students who do not meet that criteria may nonetheless experience significant transportation hardship, including those who live far from their home school or lack safe walking or biking routes, qualify for protections under the McKinney-Vento Act (MVA), are in foster care or receiving specialized student support services, or were assigned to a school by Department direction for safety, programmatic, or other reasons. Because many of these circumstances are unrelated to household income, this suggested prioritization framework may unintentionally limit access for vulnerable student groups who rely on bus transportation for reasons other than income status.

The Department also notes operational and regulatory considerations related to both the School Food Services Branch (SFSB) and the Student Transportation Services Branch (STSB). Compliance with federal privacy laws, the unique data environment at Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools, and ongoing bus driver shortages statewide continue to constrain capacity across multiple complexes. As a result, any prioritization system must balance fairness, legal compliance, and operational feasibility.

The Department thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide comments on HB1780, HD1.



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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

H.B. NO. 1780, H.D. 1, RELATING TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

DATE: Wednesday, March 18, 2026 **TIME:** 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Anne T. Horiuchi or Randall M. Wat, Deputy Attorneys General

Chair Kim and Members of the Committee:

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

The bill: (1) requires the Department of Education (DOE) to establish a student bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students who meet certain statutory requirements; (2) requires reports to the Legislature; and (3) appropriates funds.

There are references throughout the bill to "a free bus pass" or to "free bus passes" that could be misconstrued as including free municipal bus passes, in addition to free school bus passes. To avoid any potential misinterpretation, the Department suggests inserting the word "school" between "free" and "bus" on: page 2, lines 16 and 18-19; page 3, lines 9-10; page 4, lines 2, 5-6, 10, 14, and 20; page 5, lines 2-3, 10, 16-17, and 20; and page 6, lines 1-2, and 9-10.

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



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Osa Tui, Jr.
President

Logan Okita
Vice President

Cheney Kaku
Secretary-Treasurer

Andrea Eshelman
Executive Director

TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAI'I SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Item: HB 1780, HD1 – Relating to Student Transportation

Position: Support

Hearing: Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 1:00 pm, Room 229

Submitter: Osa Tui, Jr., President - Hawai'i State Teachers Association

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **supports** H.B. 1780, HD1 which establishes the Hawai'i Free School Bus Access for Low-income Students Act. This measure is a critical step toward ensuring that every child in Hawai'i has a reliable way to get to the classroom. By codifying the requirement for free bus passes into Hawaii Revised Statutes, this bill provides the long-term stability that families need. It ensures that transportation remains a protected component of a student's right to education rather than a policy that could be modified without legislative oversight.

This legislation is particularly vital following the passage of S.B. 1300 (Act 139, 2025), which significantly expanded free school meals in our state. While that law correctly addresses student hunger by expanding free meal eligibility to families earning up to 300% of the federal poverty level—well beyond standard U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines—a gap remains in our transportation policy. Currently, there is no reciprocal benefit for transportation, meaning many students receiving free meals are still required to pay for school bus passes. H.B. 1780, HD1 closes this gap by ensuring that any student qualifying for free or reduced-price meals receives a free bus pass.

Beyond the financial benefits, H.B. 1780, HD1 addresses systemic barriers created by the current reservation-based system. Many low-income families struggle to secure seats due to limited internet access or inflexible work schedules. By requiring the Department of Education to prioritize these students and streamline the application process to avoid duplicative paperwork, this bill removes the hurdles that lead to chronic

absenteeism. We urge committee to pass H.B. 1780, HD1 and ensure that our progress in fighting student hunger is matched by our commitment to student mobility.

Mahalo.



HIPHI Board

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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 17, 2026

To: Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidanii, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Committee on Education

Re: Support with Amendments for HB 1780 HD1, Relating To Student
Transportation

Hrg: March 18, 2026 at 1:00 PM in Conference Room 229

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating + Active Living² (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **support with amendments of HB 1780 HD1**, which takes an important step toward improving educational access by requiring the Department of Education (DOE) to establish a student bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students who are eligible for free school meals.

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 on time. By providing free bus passes to students facing financial hardship, this bill promotes fair access, reduces absenteeism, and supports the State's commitment to ensuring every child has meaningful access to public education.

Provide Free Bus Passes for All Students

While HIPHI strongly supports the intent of HB 1780 HD1, we respectfully urge the Committee to amend the bill to extend free student bus passes to all DOE students, rather than limiting eligibility to only those who are eligible for free school meals.

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

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



Universal access to student transportation would:

- Remove stigma and administrative barriers tied to income-based eligibility,
- Ensure students from working families just above the threshold are not excluded,
- Increase overall attendance, retention, and educational opportunity statewide³
- Reduce traffic vehicle crashes, air pollution, and associated respiratory illnesses, and increase physical activity levels⁴
- Simplify implementation and reporting for the Department of Education.

Transportation should function as a basic educational support service, not a financial obstacle. Expanding this program to all students would create a more equitable, efficient, and inclusive system that benefits families, schools, and communities across Hawaii.

For these reasons, HIPHI supports HB 1780 HD1 and respectfully requests that it be amended to provide free bus passes for all DOE students who utilize school transportation services.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patti Hatzistavrakis'.

Patti Hatzistavrakis
Active Transportation Specialist

³ 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>

⁴ CDC. (2026, January 14). Improving Health Through Transportation Policy.
<https://www.cdc.gov/transportation/php/about/index.html>

To: Senate Committee on Education
Re: HB 1780 HD1-Relating to Student Transportation
Hawai'i State Capitol room 229 & Via Videoconference March
18, 2026, 1:00 PM

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Kidani, and Respected Committee Members,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks! I am submitting this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 1780 HD1**, which would provide free school bus transportation to students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

At its core, this bill is about educational access. When students cannot reliably get to school, every other investment we make in curriculum, teachers, and student supports is undermined. Attendance is directly tied to academic achievement, and transportation challenges remain a persistent and often overlooked cause of chronic absenteeism.

In Hawai'i, many working families live paycheck to paycheck. A significant share fall into the ALICE category, earning above the federal poverty level yet still unable to consistently cover basic expenses. For these households, transportation costs add up quickly. When families must choose between groceries, rent, childcare, and bus fees, something gives. Too often, it is consistent school attendance.

HB 1780 HD1 recognizes that students who qualify for meal assistance are already identified as facing financial hardship. Aligning bus access with that eligibility is both efficient and equitable. It reduces administrative burdens for families and schools while ensuring that those most likely to need support receive it without unnecessary barriers.

The bill's emphasis on proactive outreach and prioritization is particularly important. Systems that rely solely on first-come, first-served distribution can unintentionally disadvantage families with limited internet access, language differences, or inflexible work schedules. An equity-centered approach ensures that students are not left behind because of logistical hurdles.

Reliable transportation supports more than just attendance. It helps stabilize family routines, reduces stress on caregivers, and allows parents to maintain employment without scrambling for daily transportation solutions. For students in rural areas and on neighbor islands, where alternatives may be limited, access to a bus can be the determining factor in whether they arrive at school ready to learn.

If we are serious about closing opportunity gaps and strengthening long-term outcomes for Hawai'i's keiki, we must address the practical barriers that stand in their way. Providing free bus access to income-eligible students is a smart, targeted investment that promotes equity and strengthens our public education system. Please pass HB 1780

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. Please **PASS HB 1780 HD1**.



Testimony in Support for HB1780 - Relating to Student Transportation
Senate Committee on Education (EDU)
Wednesday, March 18, 2026 at 1:00PM

Dear Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and members of the EDU committee,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HB1780, which would expand and prioritize access to free school bus transportation for students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Reliable school transportation is a critical, yet often overlooked, component of educational access. For many families across Hawai'i, getting a child to and from school is not just a matter of convenience—it is a daily logistical and financial challenge. Students from households with limited incomes are disproportionately impacted, often facing long commutes, inconsistent transportation options, or reliance on caregivers who must balance work and other responsibilities.

HB1780 takes an important step toward addressing these barriers by prioritizing free bus access for students with the greatest financial need. By aligning transportation eligibility with free and reduced-price lunch qualification, the bill recognizes that affordability should not determine whether a student can consistently attend school, participate in enrichment opportunities, or fully engage in their education.

When students have dependable transportation, the benefits extend far beyond the classroom. Improved access to school buses has been linked to better attendance, reduced tardiness, and increased participation in after-school programs. For families, it can ease financial strain and reduce the time burden associated with coordinating daily travel. For the broader community, increased school bus utilization can reduce traffic congestion and vehicle emissions—particularly during peak school commute hours.

At present, Hawai'i's school bus system is constrained by limited capacity and high costs, leaving many eligible students without access. Families who do not qualify for free transportation must often pay bus fees or find alternative arrangements, even when they are already struggling to make ends meet.

In summary, HB1780 is a practical and equity-driven policy that will improve access to education, reduce financial burdens for working families, and strengthen Hawai'i's public school system.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



www.AlohaILHawaii.org

Mar 18, 2026

MISSION

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) dedicated to providing independent living programs and services for persons with disabilities in Hawaii.

We work together with the community and consumers to improve the quality of life through individual choices and access to services.

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The Honorable Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senate Committee on Education
The Thirty-Third Legislature
State Capitol
State of Hawaii
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

SUBJECT: HB1780 HD1 – Relating to Student Transportation

Chair and Members of the Committee:

Aloha Independent Living Hawaii (AILH) is a Center for Independent Living (CIL) that serves people with all types of disabilities statewide. We **support HB1780 HD1's intent** to reduce transportation barriers for low-income students and improve equitable access to public education, and we respectfully request amendments to explicitly protect students with disabilities and other highly vulnerable student groups.

HB1780 HD1 would require the Department of Education (DOE) to establish a student bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students covered by section 302A-404 (students who receive a free meal) and to prioritize these students for available bus seats. The bill also directs DOE to streamline applications and data sharing (with consent), proactively inform families about eligibility and timelines, and submit annual reports on implementation. These are important steps toward equity.

From an Independent Living and cross-disability perspective, school transportation is not just a convenience; it is a core access service tied to the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and to community participation. When transportation is unreliable, inaccessible, or financially out of reach, students with disabilities miss instruction time, therapies, and inclusive activities, and families lose both income and stability.



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The Department of Education's prior testimony on this bill confirmed what families already experience: focusing eligibility and seat priority only on free- or reduced-price meal status may unintentionally exclude other vulnerable students who face very serious transportation barriers. DOE specifically flagged students who:

- Live far from school or lack safe walking/biking routes
- Are protected under the McKinney-Vento Act
- Are in foster care
- Receive specialized student support services
- Are assigned to schools by DOE direction for safety, program, or other reasons

Many of these students are also students with disabilities, including those with IEPs, 504 plans, or intensive behavioral/mental health supports. Their need for reliable, accessible transportation is driven by disability, housing instability, or state involvement—not only by income. Limiting formal prioritization to meal status alone risks deepening inequities for disabled students and other high-need groups who already struggle with attendance and continuity of services.

At the same time, families have described serious barriers with the current reservation-based, first-come, first-served system, including website crashes, repeated timeouts, and the need to reapply each quarter, which is especially hard for families without flexible work schedules or reliable internet access. These kinds of systems issues can disproportionately harm families of students with disabilities, who may already be juggling medical appointments, service coordination, and language access.

For AILH, a cross-disability Independent Living approach means that:

- Transportation policy should be designed so students with disabilities can attend their neighborhood school, receive required services, and participate in their communities on an equal basis with their nondisabled peers.



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- Prioritization frameworks should center students most at risk of exclusion—not only those whose families meet an income test.
- Application and communication processes must be accessible, simple, and not depend on constant online monitoring or English-only forms.

HB1780 HD1 already takes a strong step by naming proactive identification, prioritization, and communication as equity tools. We urge the Senate Committee on Education to build on that foundation by explicitly including disability and related vulnerability categories in the prioritization language.

SPECIFIC AMENDMENT REQUEST

We respectfully request that the Committee amend section 302A-406, as amended by HB1780 HD1, to ensure that the student bus fare rate system and seat prioritization explicitly include students with disabilities and other high-risk groups alongside students covered by section 302A-404.

For example, in subsection (f) on prioritization, after “students who are covered by section 302A-404 shall be prioritized,” we request adding language substantially similar to:

*“...and, to the extent practicable, the department shall also prioritize:
(A) Students with disabilities who have an individualized education program or a plan under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
(B) Students who are protected under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
(C) Students in foster care; and
(D) Students who receive specialized student support services or who are assigned to a school by department direction for safety, programmatic, or other documented educational reasons.”*

This approach is consistent with DOE’s own testimony recognizing that these students experience transportation hardship independent of household income. It leverages the bill’s equity intent and ensures that the



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first-come, first-served model does not continue to disadvantage those with the greatest need.

We also encourage the Committee to include, either in the report or in bill language as appropriate, the expectation that DOE:

- Ensure the bus application system and related communications are accessible to families with disabilities (including alternate formats and plain-language options), and
- Provide accessible, low-burden alternatives to online, time-sensitive sign-up for families who cannot remain online for extended periods.

These changes would move Hawaii closer to a student transportation system that functions as a true access service for all keiki, especially those with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and those in foster care, in line with both state and federal obligations.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on HB1780 HD1. AILH respectfully urges the Committee to pass this measure with amendments to explicitly prioritize students with disabilities and other highly vulnerable student groups within the student bus fare rate system.

Aloha,

Roxanne Bolden

Executive Director

HB-1780-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2026 12:14:15 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------|------------------------|
| Piikea Kalakau-Baarde | Testifying for Teach for America Hawai'i | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Senator Kim, Chair, Senator Kidani, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, and I work at Teach for America Hawai'i. I'm a former public school teacher and now support TFA Hawai'i's local initiatives, including our corps member programming, early literacy, alumni leadership development, external affairs, and more.

I am writing to express my strong support for H.B. 1780, which establishes the "Hawai'i Free School Bus Access for Low-income Students Act." This legislation is a vital step toward guaranteeing that every child in our state has a reliable way to get to the classroom.

By codifying the requirement for free bus passes into the Hawai'i Revised Statutes, this bill provides families with long-term stability. It ensures that student transportation remains a protected component of a child's right to education, rather than a policy that could be modified without legislative oversight.

This legislation is particularly essential following the passage of Act 139 (2025), which successfully expanded free school meals to families earning up to 300% of the federal poverty level. While we have made great strides in addressing student hunger, a gap remains: many students who now qualify for free meals are still required to pay for school bus passes. H.B. 1780 closes this gap by ensuring that any student qualifying for meal assistance also receives a free bus pass.

Furthermore, H.B. 1780 addresses the systemic barriers created by the current reservation system. Many low-income families struggle to secure seats due to limited internet access or inflexible work schedules. By requiring the Department of Education to prioritize these students and streamline the application process, this bill removes the hurdles that frequently lead to chronic absenteeism.

I urge the committee to pass H.B. 1780 and ensure that our state's commitment to student mobility matches our progress in fighting student hunger.

Mahalo,

Pi'ikea Kalakau-Baarde, EdD

TFA Hawai'i



To: Senate Committee on Education (EDU)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2026, 1pm

Comments on HB1780 HD1

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and EDU Committee members;

I am Co-Founder of the Hawai'i chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **provides comments for HB1780 HD1** that would require the Department of Education to establish a student bus fare rate system that includes free bus passes for students who meet certain statutory requirements.

While 350Hawaii strongly supports the intent of HB 1780 HD1, we respectfully urge the Committee to amend the bill to extend free student bus passes to **all DOE students**, rather than limiting eligibility to only those who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch.

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

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

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

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, switching to public transit is one of the most impactful personal changes for individuals to take to lower their carbon emissions. And shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit not only lowers emissions, it reduces traffic, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways.

Transforming transportation from a financial hurdle to a universal support service is crucial. Making this service accessible to **all students** promotes equity and strengthens communities across the state. To help protect our climate and future, we respectfully request that HB1780 HD1 be amended to provide free bus passes for all DOE students who utilize school transportation services.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sherry Pollack

Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org

LATE



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1780 HD1
RELATING TO STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘ona‘auao
(Senate Committee on Education)

Ke Kapitala ‘o Hawai‘i
(Hawai‘i State Capitol)

March 18, 2026

1:00 PM

Room 229

Aloha e Chair Mercado Kim, Vice Chair Kidani and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS HB1780 HD1** because it addresses a practical barrier that prevents many students from consistently accessing public education—reliable transportation to and from school. By ensuring that students from low-income households receive free school bus passes, the measure helps reduce one of the everyday obstacles that can undermine consistent attendance and participation in school. Reliable transportation is particularly important for families facing economic hardship, many of whom already struggle to balance housing, food, childcare, and transportation costs. When students cannot reliably reach school, educational opportunities, student supports, and instructional investments cannot fully achieve their intended impact.

Moreover, the measure promotes equitable access to education by reducing structural barriers that can unintentionally disadvantage families with limited time, internet access, or language resources. Transportation systems that rely heavily on first-come, first-served reservation processes can inadvertently disadvantage working families who cannot monitor application timelines or navigate complex processes during limited enrollment windows. By prioritizing students who already qualify for meal assistance and streamlining eligibility procedures, the State can help ensure that transportation resources are distributed in a manner that more effectively reaches students with the greatest need.¹

¹ Hawai‘i State Department of Education, School Bus Handbook (describing school bus eligibility systems and operational procedures affecting student transportation access)

Reliable school transportation can be particularly important for Hawaiian language immersion programs and Hawaiian-focused public charter schools that serve substantial numbers of Native Hawaiian students. These schools often draw students from wider geographic areas in order to sustain specialized educational programs grounded in Hawaiian language, culture, and place-based learning. For families whose children attend these programs, transportation can be a determining factor in whether students are able to consistently access culturally grounded educational pathways. Improving access to school bus transportation therefore helps support educational stability for Native Hawaiian learners while strengthening the programs that play an important role in language revitalization and culturally relevant education in Hawai‘i’s public school system.²

OHA recognizes that while this measure appropriately targets students identified as facing financial hardship through existing eligibility systems, Hawai‘i’s high cost of living means that many working families, including those classified as ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained Employed)³, may still experience transportation barriers despite not qualifying under these thresholds. While we encourage the legislature to consider expanding eligibility for this important program, this measure represents an important and practical step toward reducing barriers to education and strengthening outcomes for students across the State.

For these reasons, OHA respectfully urges the committee to **PASS HB1780 HD1** as a targeted step to strengthen educational access, improve attendance, and support the students and schools that serve Native Hawaiian communities across the State.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

² Hawai‘i State Public Charter School Commission, Annual Report 2022–2023; Hawai‘i State Department of Education, Ka Papahana Kaiapuni: Hawaiian Language Immersion Program (describing the statewide immersion education system and the role of charter schools and immersion programs in serving Native Hawaiian students)

³ United for ALICE, ALICE in Hawai‘i: A Study of Financial Hardship (United Way of Hawai‘i, 2023) (finding that a large share of Hawai‘i households earn above the federal poverty level yet struggle to cover basic living expenses due to the high cost of living)

HB-1780-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 10:41:12 PM

Testimony for EDU on 3/18/2026 1:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ted Meehan | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Please support HB 1780. Thank you.

Ted Meehan