



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.

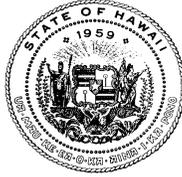
**Department's Position:** Comments

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.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR OF HAWAII  
KE KIA'ĀINA O KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'



KENNETH S. FINK, MD, MGA, MPH  
DIRECTOR OF HEALTH  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

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**Testimony in SUPPORT of (HB2179)  
RELATING TO TO TRANSPORTATION**

REPRESENTATIVE JUSTIN WOODSON, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 2:00PM | Room Number: 309

1 **Fiscal Implications:** None

2 **Department Position:** The Department of Health (“Department”) supports this measure and  
3 respectfully offers the following comments.

4 **Department Testimony:** The Emergency Medical Services & Injury Prevention System Branch  
5 (EMSIPSB) provides this testimony on behalf of the Department in strong support of the  
6 inclusion of electric bicycle (e-bike) safety education for school students from kindergarten  
7 through grade twelve.

8 E-bike related injuries represent a growing and preventable public safety concern in  
9 Hawaii. Between January 1, 2022 and February 3, 2026, Hawaii’s 911 Emergency Medical  
10 Services have responded to 765 e-bike related injuries statewide. Of these incidents, 234  
11 involved children and adolescents between the ages of 4 and 18, underscoring a significant and  
12 increasing risk to our youth.

13 The number of e-bike related injuries has risen steadily each year:

14 - 106 injuries in 2022

15 - 165 injuries in 2023

- 1 - 227 injuries in 2024
- 2 - 244 injuries in 2025
- 3 - 23 injuries in 2026 as of February 3, 2026

4 Overall, this reflects a 130.2% increase in e-bike related injuries since 2022. These sustained  
5 increases are particularly concerning given the number of incidents involving school-aged  
6 riders.

7 In addition to overall injury trends, the severity of these incidents is notable. Between January  
8 1, 2022 and February 3, 2026, 911 Emergency Medical Services transported nearly 300 patients  
9 with traumatic brain injuries, many of which are preventable through early education, helmet  
10 use, and safer riding practices.

11 The Department supports the implementation of age-appropriate e-bike safety education that  
12 includes instruction on safe operation, helmet use, traffic laws, and shared roadway awareness.  
13 Evidence-based injury prevention strategies consistently demonstrate that early education and  
14 skill-building are critical to reducing preventable injuries and improving community safety.

15 Delivering this program statewide ensures consistent, equitable access to essential safety  
16 education for all students, regardless of school location or community resources. This proactive  
17 approach aligns with injury prevention best practices and helps protect the health and safety of  
18 Hawaii's keiki.

19 For these reasons, the Department of Health respectfully supports this measure.

20 **Offered Amendments:** None

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

**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"<br>Billionaire | Ohana Unity Party &<br>Kingdom of The Hawaiian<br>Islands | Support            | Remotely Via<br>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](http://www.Ohanaunityparty.com) [Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com](mailto:Presidentbillionaire@gmail.com) \



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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
Thursday - February 5, 2026 - 2:00pm

**Hawai'i Bicycling League Strongly Supports HB 2179, relating to Transportation, with remarks**

Aloha Chair Woodson, Vice Chair La Chica 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 2179, to require the DOE to develop and administer an expanded Traffic Safety Education Program to include electric bicycles. For 36 years, HBL has partnered with the Department of Transportation Services in the City and County of Honolulu to bring in-school on-bike education to 4th graders across O'ahu in a week-long series. We also have been partnering with HDOT to provide e-bike education workshops for adults and older youth, as well as developed a series of e-bike informational videos available on-line.

HBL has long advocated that beyond legislation and device regulations, people, especially youth, need more exposure to hands-on learning and skills building opportunities to develop safe riding skills and an understanding of rules of the road. Our trained instructors have visited every county and provided on-bike instruction to diverse audiences from keiki to kūpuna, for law enforcement, for amateurs and people of all skill levels and abilities.

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. This is increasingly important for emerging technologies that can help individuals and families choose safer and more affordable transportation options, like e-bikes.

Currently, the DOE does not have curricula as proposed in this bill, nor the staff or resources to provide this expanded instruction. We recommend that this bill be amended to require the DOE to contract with a Hawai'i based provider with decades of experience providing bicycle safety education for students, to inform the proposed expansion and delivery of service at public schools.

In a related note, HBL has submitted a grant-in-aid request to provide expanded education services for youth and adults to address the epidemic of traffic violence. We hope you will consider that proposal favorably to leverage the intent of this bill.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

S/Eduardo Hernandez

Advocacy Director, Hawaii Bicycling League

**HB-2179**

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

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

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>         |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 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

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Testify</b>            |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Terri Yoshinaga     | Individual          | Support                   | Written Testimony<br>Only |

Comments:

I support this bill.