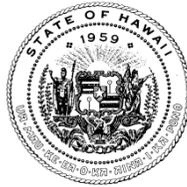


JOSH GREEN, M.D.  
GOVERNOR  
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

EDWIN H. SNIFFEN  
DIRECTOR  
KA LUNA HO'OKELE

Deputy Directors  
Nā Hope Luna Ho'okele  
DREANALEE K. KALILI  
TAMMY L. LEE  
CURT T. OTAGURO  
ROBIN K. SHISHIDO

Thursday, February 5, 2026  
9:30 AM  
State Capitol, 430

HB2373  
**RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

House Committee on Transportation

---

The Department of Transportation (DOT) supports HB2373, which establishes a two-year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on Oahu and Kauai and appropriates funds for its implementation. While the DOT supports HB2373, we favor comprehensive statewide fare-free transit for youth, such as in the Keiki Ride Free bill (HB1879/SB2699), and look forward to continuing to work with the legislature on these bills.

The DOT recognizes the important role that accessible and affordable public transit plays in achieving the State's energy security and decarbonization goals. The DOT's Hawai'i Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, published in October 2025, explains how the transportation sector must implement a range of strategies to meet statewide greenhouse gas reduction targets established in state law (Sections 225P-5 and 225P-8, Hawaii Revised Statutes). The Plan promotes "low-carbon alternatives to vehicle travel" and specifically identifies fare-free youth transit as a recommended legislative strategy. Strategy HWY-M-12 in the Plan calls to "enact legislation that provides a funding mechanism ... to incentivize counties to provide free public bus access to youth and improve safety for youth on buses," noting that this approach would remove transportation barriers for youth, particularly those from low-income or underserved communities, while reducing single-rider vehicle use and therefore traffic (Plan p. 65).

By eliminating fare barriers for young riders, this pilot program has the potential to:

1. Provide financial relief to families, particularly those with limited income
2. Increase transit ridership among youth and families on Oahu and Kauai
3. Reduce traffic congestion on Oahu and Kauai
4. Reduce vehicle emissions on Oahu and Kauai by encouraging public transit use
5. Improve youth access on Oahu and Kauai to educational, recreational, employment, and community engagement opportunities
6. Provide all youth on Oahu and Kauai with a way home during times of emergency, without causing traffic that may slow or block first responder vehicles

The DOT will continue to work collaboratively with our county partners and other stakeholders to support the successful implementation of this pilot program, should it be enacted. The DOT thanks this Committee, and the many legislators supporting expanded transit access this session, for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill, noting our preference for a more comprehensive statewide approach.



## Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Committee on Transportation

February 5, 2026 at 3:00PM

Conference Room 430

**HB2373**

**Relating to Public Transit**

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Committees Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports HB2373**, which would establish and appropriate funds for the Department of Transportation to create a fare-free youth transit pilot program for children on Oahu and Kauai.

The bill aligns with our goal of providing an equitable and affordable transportation system while also striving for a more sustainable future. Providing children the opportunity to ride transit fare-free can offer financial relief for families while also fostering opportunities for growth and independence in youth. On Oahu, households [spend nearly 50% of their income on housing and transportation costs](#). Transportation costs alone can reach thousands of dollars each year when fuel, maintenance, and other expenses are factored in. Thus, offering youth the option to ride public transit for free could result in significant savings for households while allowing youth further autonomy to access extracurriculars, internships, and recreational activities with friends and loved ones.

Free fares youth can further increase the use of public transit, strengthening local economies and reducing congestion while advancing the state's goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Increased transit use also brings health and safety benefits as transit riders walk more, emit less carbon, and experience fewer traffic-related injuries.

While there are existing state and county programs that offer fare-free or reduced-fare transit—such as the EXPRESS County Bus Program, which is limited to students attending their home school and living at least 1.5 miles away—this bill would eliminate remaining transportation cost barriers and extend fare-free access to all youth.

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](#)).

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony on this measure.



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

**Date:** 02/05/2026

**Time:** 09:30 AM

**Location:** 430 VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

**Committee:** TRN

**Department:** Education

**Person Testifying:** Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

**Title of Bill:** HB2373, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

**Purpose of Bill:** Establishes a two-year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on Oahu and Kauai. Appropriates funds.

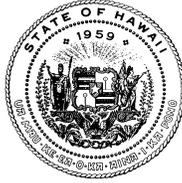
**Department's Position:**

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports HB 2373, establishing a two-year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on Oahu and Kauai to provide fare-free county transit services for all Hawaii children from birth through age 18. While the Department currently provides free county bus passes for transportation-qualified middle, intermediate, and high school students on both Oahu and Kauai, this pilot would provide resources to build on existing systems to assist more families.

Increasing youth transit ridership helps reduce car traffic around campuses, lowers emissions, and cultivates long-term public transit habits. Encouraging students to use county transit today supports Hawaii's long-range goals to decrease reliance on fossil fuels and improve roadway efficiency. HB 2373 aligns with the State's environmental priorities highlighted in the bill.

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

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

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

**Testimony in SUPPORT of H.B. 2373  
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

REPRESENTATIVE DARIUS K. KILA, CHAIR  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Hearing Date: February 5, 2026, 9:30 AM      Room Number: Conference Room 430  
via Videoconference

- 1    **Fiscal Implications:** The Department of Health (DOH) defers to the Department of
- 2    Transportation (DOT) for fiscal implications of implementation.
- 3    **Department Position:** The DOH supports House Bill 2373 (H.B. 2373), which establishes a two-
- 4    year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on Oahu and Kauai.
- 5    **Department Testimony:** Despite Hawaii's favorable climate, geography, and reputation for
- 6    active outdoor living, only 33% of adult and 18% of high school students in Hawaii met federal
- 7    guidelines for physical activity.<sup>1,2</sup> The design of roads that integrate active transportation
- 8    options like walking, bicycling, and transit is a public health concern since the safety and
- 9    accessibility of a community's built environment can promote or hinder physical activity. This
- 10   includes removing barriers to safely and conveniently accessing active transportation options to
- 11   destinations such as schools, shopping, and worksites. Safe, accessible, and walkable
- 12   communities encourage physical activity and can promote better health outcomes in

---

<sup>1</sup> Hawaii Health Data Warehouse, Hawaii State Department of Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> 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](https://hhdw.org/report/query/result/yrbs/PhysActMeetRec/PhysActMeetRec_HS_ST.html)

1 communities whose populations are at less risk for serious chronic diseases and conditions such  
2 as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.<sup>3</sup>

3 The establishment of a fare-free youth transit program is a significant step forward in  
4 advancing a public health framework that prioritizes equity, safety, and environmental  
5 resilience.<sup>4</sup> By removing financial barriers to public transit, this measure will address a critical  
6 social determinant of health, ensuring that a child's socioeconomic status does not limit their  
7 access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and nutritious food. This universal,  
8 fare-free system replaces fragmented county programs with a simple, reliable solution that  
9 eases the financial burden on Hawaii's families while fostering independence and confidence in  
10 our keiki.

11 From a safety perspective, this bill directly supports the State's commitment to Vision  
12 Zero (Hawaii Revised Statutes § 286-7), which aims to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and  
13 serious injuries. Shifting youth trips from private vehicles to public transit reduces overall  
14 vehicle miles traveled (VMT), thereby lowering traffic congestion and the statistical likelihood of  
15 roadway accidents. Furthermore, public transit promotes "active transportation," as most  
16 transit trips involve walking or biking to and from stops. By encouraging these habits early in  
17 life, we can increase physical activity levels and combat the long-term prevalence of chronic  
18 diseases associated with sedentary lifestyles.<sup>5</sup> Establishing a culture of transit ridership in our  
19 youth will yield dividends for generations to come, creating a more sustainable, and healthy  
20 Oahu and Kauai.

21 **Offered Amendments:** None

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

---

<sup>3</sup> CDC *About Physical Activity*. 2021.

<sup>4</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Impacts of Fare-Free Programs on Transit Ridership and Equity*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press; 2023. <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/27171/>

<sup>5</sup> Saelens BE, Vernez Moudon A, Kang B, Hurvitz PM, Zhou C. Relation between public transit use and physical activity. *Am J Public Health*. 2014;104(5):854-859. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2014.302101

**HB-2373**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:34:48 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/5/2026 9:30:00 AM

<b>Submitted By</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Testifier Position</b>	<b>Testify</b>
Henry Curtis	Life of the Land	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha

**STRONG SUPPORT**

Free transit is absolutely necessary to reduce road congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

Henry Curtis, Executive Director



**Testimony in Support for HB2373 - Relating to Public Transit**  
**Committee on Transportation (TRN)**  
**Thursday, February 5th, 2026 at 9:30AM**

---

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the TRN committee, Mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in strong support of HB2373**, which would establish a two-year “Keiki Ride Free” Pilot Program on O’ahu and Kaua’i to provide year-round, fare-free public transit access to residents aged 18 and under in Hawai’i. We also offer **suggested amendments** for the committee’s consideration.

Public transit is more than a way to get from place to place—it’s a tool for growth, opportunity and community connection. Transit is particularly important for young people, the largest demographic of residents who do not drive. While roughly 20 percent of Hawai’i residents are under the age of 18, their mobility options are limited. This often requires keiki to rely on their parents or caregivers to transport them, which can be time consuming, stressful, and costly for families.

When young people can move freely, they gain confidence, independence, and access to the full range of opportunities the islands offer. Transit connects keiki to after-school programs, internships, health care, recreation and friends, while also building lifelong public transit habits.

One of the most effective ways to improve people’s mobility, especially for keiki, is to provide free access to public transit. Local and national fare-free transit programs have been shown to produce several social, economic, and environmental benefits, including:

- Significant increases in overall transit ridership;
- Boosted local economic activity; and
- Reduced fuel consumption and carbon emissions.<sup>1</sup>

There is a patchwork of reduced-fare and limited fare-free programs currently available in Hawai’i. For example, the Hawai’i Department of Education’s EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program provides free rides for some intermediate and highschool students—but only during the school year, only for those who attend their home schools (no-Geographical Exemptions), and only if they live at least 1.5 miles away.<sup>2</sup> This program has served thousands of students. However, thousands of keiki are still left out: elementary-aged children, students attending private or charter schools, those living closer to school, and those needing transportation in the summer months.

---

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, “Freeing the Climate: Environmental Benefits of Eliminating Transit Fares,” 2021.

<https://massbudget.org/2021/03/24/freeing-the-climate-environmental-benefits-of-eliminating-transit-fares/>.

<sup>2</sup> Hawai’i Department of Education, “EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program,” accessed January, 2026.

<https://hawaiipublicschools.org/school-services/express-county-bus-pass-program/>

Meanwhile, youth in Maui County can already ride for free on fixed routes, and Hawai'i County's Hele-On system has been completely fare-free since 2022. O'ahu and Kaua'i youth still pay to ride, however. That's despite Honolulu's transit fares being raised twice over the last five years, and most recently, in January, 2025 the Honolulu City Council voted to pass Bill 54, which will once again increase transit fares.<sup>3</sup> Under Bill 54, youth monthly and annual passes will increase by 12.5 percent, costing nearly \$500 per year.<sup>4</sup>

These inconsistencies create inequity: a keiki's ability to use transit freely depends largely on where they live, the type of school they attend, and their family's income. A statewide program would create consistent access for youth and ensure that county transit agencies are financially supported as they expand youth ridership.

While the fiscal investment needed to support this program may seem large to some, it is miniscule compared to the state's investment in infrastructure that supports vehicle travel. Based on Hawai'i Appleseed's 2024 analysis, Hawai'i Department of Transportation's (HDOT) capital improvement program (CIP) budget averaged about \$700 million over the past decade.<sup>5</sup> Between fiscal year (FY) 2019 and FY2024, 66.3 percent of HDOT's CIP budget went toward projects that expanded vehicle capacity, while only 1.5 percent was directed toward pedestrian, bicycling, and transit infrastructure.<sup>6</sup>

This spending imbalance has led to a transportation system that exacerbates the very problems it aims to solve—higher emissions, more traffic, and unmet needs for those relying on non-automotive forms of transportation. More specifically, this hinders the state's ability to meet net-zero emissions by 2045, as mandated under HRS §225P-5. Under the Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, created as an outcome of the *Navahine* agreement, HDOT committed to enacting legislation to provide public bus access to youth.

## Suggested Amendments

Hawai'i Appleseed respectfully requests the following amendments to further the impact of the proposed legislation:

- **Remove provisions requiring county-provided youth transit passes:** To reduce administrative burden we suggest that instead of requiring youth transit cards, all youth ages 18 and under should be allowed to freely board county buses. Eliminating passes removes enrollment barriers, shortens boarding times, and significantly reduces administrative costs associated with issuing, replacing, and verifying transit passes. National best practices consistently show that fare-free

---

<sup>3</sup> Honolulu City Council, Bill 54 (CD1): Relating to Public Transit, 2025.

<https://hnldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnldoc/document-download?id=25846>.

<sup>4</sup> Honolulu City Council, "Bill 54: Relating to Public Transit," Introduced July 22, 2025.

<https://hnldoc.ehawaii.gov/hnldoc/measure/3424>

<sup>5</sup> Seitz, A., "Shifting budget priorities to expand mobility options & reduce vehicle travel," Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, December, 2024. <https://hiappleseed.org/publications/rethinking-roads>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

programs experience higher utilization and lower overhead when riders are not required to carry specialized transit passes.

To support appropriate fare enforcement while maintaining barrier-free access, bus drivers could ask youth who appear older than 18 to show a student ID or state-issued ID. This light-touch identification approach ensures program integrity without placing unnecessary burdens on families, schools, or transit agencies. By relying on existing IDs rather than creating new pass systems, counties can focus resources on improving service quality rather than managing fare administration.

- **Extend the program to also include Maui county and Hawai'i county:** Similar to other measures currently being proposed – including SB2699 and HB1879 – we believe that Maui county and Hawai'i county should be included in a Keiki Ride Free program. While both of these counties do currently offer fare-free transit to youth, these jurisdictions could still benefit from the fiscal support provided through the program. It would also be advantageous to include Maui county and Hawai'i county for data collection purposes.

...

In summary, Keiki Ride Free is a practical, evidence-based policy that will improve access to education, reduce household transportation costs, and advance the State's climate commitments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Abbey Seitz

Director of Transportation Equity

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice



## HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS  
Chair  
John A. Burns School of Medicine,  
Department of Pediatrics

Jennifer José Lo, MD  
Vice Chair  
Hawai'i Health Partners

Titimaea Ta'ase, JD  
Secretary  
Taase Law Office

Jonathan Ching  
Kaiser Permanente

Tammy Ho  
The Queen's Medical Center

Carissa Holley, MEd  
Hale Makua Health Services

Joyce Lee-Ibarra, MS  
JLI Consulting

Misty Pacheco, DrPH  
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

Dina Shek, JD  
Medical-Legal Partnership  
For Children in Hawai'i

JoAnn Tsark, MPH  
John A. Burns School of Medicine, Native  
Hawaiian Research Office

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: February 3, 2026

To: Representative Darius K. Kila, Chair  
Representative Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Transportation

Re: Support for HB 2373 Relating To Public Transit

Hrg: February 5, 2026, at 9:30 AM, Conference Room 430

---

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)<sup>1</sup> and the Healthy Eating + Active Living<sup>2</sup> (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **support of HB 2373**, which establishes a two-year pilot program to provide fare-free public transit for keiki on O'ahu and Kaua'i and appropriates funds for implementation.

### Increasing Accessibility and Opportunity

Transportation affordability is a major challenge for Hawai'i families, particularly as the cost of living continues to rise statewide. For youth, access to reliable and affordable transit directly affects their ability to attend school consistently, participate in after-school programs, access healthcare, and engage in community activities. When families face financial barriers to transportation, opportunities for education and healthy development are limited.

By providing free bus accessibility, this bill promotes fair access, reduces absenteeism, and supports the state's commitment to ensuring every child has meaningful access to public education. Fare-free transit programs nationwide have increased ridership while reducing fuel use and carbon emissions.<sup>3</sup> For young people, free access connects them to school, after-school programs, healthcare, jobs, and community, while building lifelong transit habits. Fare-free transit also encourages young people to build lifelong public transportation habits. Early exposure to transit use reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, helps ease traffic congestion, lowers emissions, and supports Hawai'i's broader climate and sustainability goals.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts Budget & Policy Center, *Freeing the Climate: Environmental Benefits of Eliminating Transit Fares*, 2021. <https://massbudget.org/2021/03/24/freeing-the-climate-environmental-benefits-of-eliminating-transit-fares/>.



### **Rising Costs and Limited Options on O'ahu and Kauai**

On Oahu, students face limited school bus route options and increased costs. The Honolulu City Council just passed more than a 10% increase to fares, creating an even greater barrier to transportation.<sup>4</sup> As a time-limited pilot program, HB 2373 offers a thoughtful and fiscally responsible approach. It allows the State and counties to evaluate outcomes, ridership changes, and cost impacts while delivering immediate benefits to families and youth on O'ahu and Kaua'i. Lessons learned can guide future statewide transportation policy.

### **Proven Successes on Maui and Hawai'i Island**

Maui County allows free public transit for its youth already, with Hawai'i County allowing for free public transportation for the entire island. Since implementing this program, ridership has more than doubled in Hawai'i County. We can follow the lead from Maui and Hawai'i Island and provide free transportation access for all of our youth.

Universal access to student transportation would:

- Remove stigma and administrative barriers tied to income-based eligibility<sup>5</sup>
- Ensure students from working families just above the free school lunch thresholds are not excluded,
- Increase overall attendance, retention, and educational opportunity statewide<sup>6</sup>
- Reduce traffic vehicle crashes, air pollution, and associated respiratory illnesses, and increase physical activity levels<sup>7</sup>

Please support HB 2373, which creates consistent statewide access, removes financial and administrative barriers, treats transportation as an educational support, and aligns with our climate goals at a modest cost compared to ongoing investments in vehicle infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lauren Loor', is positioned above the printed name.

Lauren Loor  
Healthy Eating + Active Living Statewide Program Manager

---

<sup>4</sup> Hawai'i Department of Education, "EXPRESS County Bus Pass Program," accessed January, 2026.

<https://hawaiipublicschools.org/school-services/express-county-bus-pass-program/>

<sup>5</sup> Chapman, L. E., (2025). Understanding Free or Reduced-Price School Meal Stigma: A Qualitative Analysis of Parent Perspectives. The Journal of school health, 95(6), 389–399. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.70004>

<sup>6</sup> 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>

<sup>7</sup> CDC. (2026, January 14). Improving Health Through Transportation Advocacy Policy.

<https://www.cdc.gov/transportation/php/about/index.html>

<sup>8</sup> Seitz, A., "Shifting budget priorities to expand mobility options & reduce vehicle travel," Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, December, 2024. <https://hiappleseed.org/publications/rethinking-roads>.

*Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.*

To: House Committee on Transportation  
Re: **HB2373 – Relating to Public Transit**  
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference  
February 5, 2026; 9:30 AM

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

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of HB2373**, which would establish a two-year Keiki Fare-Free Transit Pilot Program on Oahu and Kauai as well as appropriate funds.

Reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation is essential for young people to reach school, jobs, and training and extracurricular programs across the state. However, high transit costs and limited school bus routes pose significant challenges for many families. These obstacles fall most heavily on low- and moderate-income households and rural communities, leading to higher rates of absenteeism and lost learning time and opportunities.

Public transit plays a vital role for youth, who make up the largest group of residents who do not drive. It provides a pathway to educational and career opportunities, personal growth, and community connection. When young people are able to travel freely, they build confidence and independence while gaining access to the full range of enrichment activities in their communities.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide this testimony. Please pass this bill.

Thank you,

Nicole Woo  
Director of Research and Economic Policy



# HAWAI'I YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

LATE \*Testimony submitted late may not be considered by the Committee for decision making purposes.

TRANSPORTATION  
HB 2373 | Thursday, February 5, 2026

## IN STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. The Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council **supports HB 2373**, as it aligns with our goals of youth fare-free transportation, **giving youth opportunities, and affordability for families.**

**HB 2373 seeks to enhance programs on Kauai and O'ahu**, the only two counties with no fare-free youth programs. Incentivizing and making it easier for youth to use public transportation enables **youth to access opportunities such as work, civic engagement, and social activities while placing less financial strain on families.**

While this bill takes the monumental step of fare-free, universal youth transportation, **the HYTC would like to note that it leaves out Maui and Hawai'i counties from this program.**

Furthermore, while both Maui and Hawai'i counties provide youth fare-free programs, they are directing resources that **could be better used by each transit agency to improve services and increase ridership across rural and urban areas towards these fare-free programs.** We are not opposed to these programs, but believe that taking this burden off counties will allow them to invest more in their transit systems. This will affect youth in these communities who may have lacked access to public transportation due to the current investment in youth-free transportation.

**On behalf of the HYTC, we hope you vote in favor of HB 2373.**

*Mahalo,*

Mia Nishiguchi  
Council Chair  
O'ahu Honolulu Representative

Luke Gee  
Council Vice-Chair  
West Side Hawai'i Representative

Moss Kuon  
Press Secretary  
Central Maui Representative

Derek Takeno  
Outreach Chair  
Central Maui Representative

Luca Zev Cuniberti  
Policy and Legislation Chair  
O'ahu North Shore Representative

Connor Ulene  
Policy and Legislation Vice Chair  
Central Maui Representative



**HB-2373**

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:04:59 PM

Testimony for TRN on 2/5/2026 9:30:00 AM

<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 HB2373 because, by making fare accessible to the youth, we are encouraging them to ride public transit. When they become exposed to public transit, they become more likely riders in the future. This step ensures that future generations do not immediately lean towards car ownership as the primary means of travel. The bill looks further out into the future to address congestion and climate change goals by mitigating the number of potential car owners.

Mahalo,

Jonathan Huynh