



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

HB2589
RELATING TO DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE

House Committee on Transportation

The Department of Transportation (DOT) strongly supports H.B. 2589, relating to penalties for operating a motor vehicle without a license.

This bill, known as 'Sara's Law', proposes to amend Section 286-136 of Hawaii Revised Statutes to increase penalties for driving without a license. Specifically, it makes a second conviction within a five-year period a Class A felony if the defendant's actions result in the death of another person. Additionally, the bill allows for vehicle forfeiture on a second conviction for operating a motor vehicle without a license within a five-year period.

Analysis of Hawaii's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data from 2019 to 2023 reveals a troubling trend: 21% of drivers involved in fatal crashes—79 out of 369—were operating without a valid license, including those with suspended or revoked privileges. Even more alarming, among drivers with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 or higher, that figure surges to 64% (32 of 50), underscoring a dangerous intersection of impairment and non-compliance. By mandating a rigorous reexamination process, this bill introduces a critical safeguard—ensuring that individuals at the highest risk demonstrate their fitness to drive before these privileges are restored.

The proposed amendments in H.B. 2589 serve as a strong deterrent against repeat offenses of driving without a license. By elevating the offense to a Class A felony in cases resulting in death, the bill underscores the severe consequences of this irresponsible behavior. Furthermore, the addition of vehicle forfeiture as a penalty for a second conviction within five years provides an additional layer of consequence that may prevent individuals from continuing to operate vehicles illegally.

These enhanced penalties are crucial in our efforts to reduce the number of unlicensed drivers on Hawaii's roadways, who pose a significant risk to public safety. The DOT believes that stricter consequences will encourage compliance with licensing requirements and ultimately contribute to a reduction in traffic fatalities and injuries.

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

**DEPARTMENT OF THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO HO'OPI'I
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU**

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**THE HONORABLE DARIUS K. KILA, CHAIR
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Thirty-Third State Legislature
Regular Session of 2026
State of Hawai'i**

February 18, 2026

RE: H.B. 2589; RELATING TO DRIVING WITHOUT LICENSE.

Chair Kila, Vice-Chair Miyake, and members of the House Committee on Transportation, the Department of the Prosecuting Attorney of the City and County of Honolulu ("Department") submits the following comment on H.B. 2589.

H.B. 2589 enhances the penalty when a convicted unlicensed driver kill another person while illegally operating a motor vehicle. Specifically, where an unlicensed driver, within five years of a prior conviction for unlicensed driving, causes the death of another by still driving, the crime aggravates from a petty misdemeanor to a Class A felony.

The Department sympathizes with the intent of this bill to provide strong deterrence against dangerous lawbreaking motorists. While a Class A felony carries serious consequences, none outweigh the irreplaceable and entirely avoidable loss of life caused when an unlicensed driver repeats the offense and kills someone.

Under the current law, an unlicensed driver who recklessly kills another can be prosecuted for manslaughter, a Class A felony.¹ Likewise, unlicensed drivers who negligently kill others can be criminally prosecuted.²

H.B. 2589 follows the logic of the common-law felony-murder rule and its corollary, the misdemeanor-manslaughter principle. Under the felony-murder rule, one who embarks on a felony and thereby causes the death of another could be charged with murder.³

¹ HRS § 707-702(1)(a).

² HRS § 707-702.5 (first-degree negligent homicide); § 707-703 (second-degree); § 707-704 (third-degree).

³ See 1 MATTHEW HALE, HISTORY OF THE PLEAS OF THE CROWN 465 (1736) ("If A come to rob B in his house, or upon the highway, or otherwise without any precedent intention of killing him, yet if in the attempt, either without or upon the resistance of B, A kills B, this is murder.").

Likewise, one who commits an unlawful act, not amounting to a felony, that causes the death of another could be charged with manslaughter.⁴ Fatal accidents caused by entirely lawful conduct carried no penalty.⁵

Early in the history of the modern court, the Hawaiian Kingdom adopted both the felony-murder rule and its corollary, the misdemeanor-manslaughter principle.⁶ It compared a burglar who killed someone with a driver who caused a death by carelessly riding an animal.⁷ The first killing sprung from a felony and was deemed a murder; the second, only manslaughter.⁸ Misdemeanor-manslaughter remained the rule throughout the Territorial period.⁹ After statehood, the Hawai'i Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of the felony-murder rule.¹⁰

In 1972, Hawai'i abolished the felony-murder rule.¹¹ As the Commentary to the murder statute explained: "It is not sound principle to convert an accidental, negligent, or reckless homicide into a murder simply because, without more, the killing was in furtherance of a criminal objective of some defined class."¹² Today, it is one of three states that does not have the felony-murder rule,¹³ though remnants of the rule survive in our law of transferred intent.¹⁴

By creating only a single instance of the misdemeanor-manslaughter rule, H.B. 2589 could foreseeably create inequities. For instance, a burglar who accidentally killed a homeowner might entirely avoid prosecution for the homicide, despite doing so in the course of a felony. At most, the burglary itself would be a Class B felony.¹⁵ On the other hand, an unlicensed driver would be subject to mandatory imprisonment without probation, a harsher sentence than even manslaughter.¹⁶

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.

⁴ 2 WHARTON'S CRIMINAL LAW § 22:14 (16th ed.) (Sept. 2025).

⁵ 3 EDWARD COKE, INSTITUTES OF THE LAWS OF ENGLAND 56 (London, M. Flesher) (1644) ("Homicide by misadventure, is when a man doth an act, that is not unlawful, which without any evil intent tendeth to a man's death. Unlawful.] If the act be unlawful it is murder. As if A, meaning to steal a deer in the park of B, shooteth at the deer, and by the glance of the arrow killeth a boy that is hidden in a bush: this is murder, for that act was unlawful, although A had no intent to hurt the boy, nor knew not of him. But if B, the owner of the park, had shot at his own deer, and without any ill intent had killed the boy by the glance of his arrow, this had been homicide by misadventure, and no felony.") (orthography standardized).

⁶ See *The King v. Bush*, 1 Haw. 38, 39 (Haw. King. 1850) ("If a person while doing or attempting to do an unlawful act, undesignedly kills another, he is guilty of murder or manslaughter, according to the nature of such act. If the act is felonious, that is, one which is highly criminal, the killing resulting from it is murder. If simply unlawful, and without any deliberate and malicious intention, it is manslaughter.").

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ See, e.g., *Territory v. Yoshimura*, 35 Haw. 324, 328 (Terr. 1940).

¹⁰ *State v. Wakinekona*, 53 Haw. 574, 580 (1972).

¹¹ See Commentary to HRS § 707-701.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ The other two are Kentucky and Michigan. See KY. REV. STAT. § 507.020; *People v. Aaron*, 299 N.W. 2d 304 (Mich. 1980).

¹⁴ Compare HRS § 702-215 (law of transferred intent) with 4 WILLIAM BLACKSTONE, COMMENTARIES ON THE LAWS OF ENGLAND *201 ("And if one intends to do another felony, and undesignedly kills a man, this is also murder. Thus if one shoots at A and misses him, but kills B, this murder, because of the previous felonious intent, which the law transfers from one to the other.").

¹⁵ See HRS § 708-810(1)(a)-(b).

¹⁶ See HRS § 706-659 (probation an authorized disposition for manslaughter).

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/13/2026 9:27:22 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

2589 HB RELATING TO DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE.

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 3:38:38 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Margarita Ko	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

We are losing too many young promising adults, they have everything going for them and were taken by drivers who should have never been behind a wheel in the first place. A car is a weapon and people should be accountable for driving without a license.

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:26:00 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cherilynn Barrett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

I'm reaching out as the aunt of Koali Denning-Ring, who died in a fatal crash in Haleiwa. Since his passing, I've witnessed firsthand the reckless driving on Joseph P. Leong Bypass Road—drivers going 80 mph in a 35 mph zone. Above all, repeat traffic crime offenders including those driving without a license plague the streets by driving recklessly ultimately committing murder in the most senseless traffic deaths.

I urge the state to establish stricter penalties for unlicensed drivers and increase police enforcement to protect residents and visitors. Harsher penalties and increasing jail sentences for homicides involving unlicensed drivers could save lives. Finally, Police presence to enforce laws of the roadways must be increased. Koali's death should be the last tragedy caused by negligence on these roads.

Thank you for hearing my plea.

Mrs. Cherilynn Barrett

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:33:19 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Sani Iaea	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Dear Representatives,

My name is Sani Iaea. My brother Koali Denning-Ring was killed in a car crash. I miss him because he played video games, showed me how to throw net, and took care of me so my Mom can work. I will never see my brother again. Please put drivers driving without a driver's license in jail for a long time. I love my big bro!

Thank you,

Sani IAEA

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 6:57:28 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Charmaine Grilho	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

My grandson, Koali Denning-Ring, died in a preventable car crash in Haleiwa in September of 2025. As I grieve, I seek healing through advocacy—for him, and for the community he loved so much.

Please help establish stricter laws that impose increased penalties and jail time for unlicensed drivers. Drivers driving without a license who kill innocent people should be locked up and throw away the key. Police presence to catch these reckless drivers with no regard for human life is needed to enforce laws. These actions would honor Koali's memory and protect other families from unimaginable loss.

Thank you for hearing my plea for justice and safety.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Charmaine Grilho

A bereaved grandmother

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 7:13:14 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert Grilho Sr	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

As a registered voter and contributing community member, I write to you with deep concern. My grandson, Koali Denning-Ring, was killed in a senseless and tragic vehicular homicide in Haleiwa in September of 2025. His partner and daughter still live in Kahuku, and I fear for their safety on these same roads.

Please consider implementing increased penalties and jail time for unlicensed drivers and enhance traffic police to enforce driving safety laws. I urge this legislation to pass stricter laws that impose increased jail sentences to set a precedence that murdering someone while driving without a license will be punished. These steps will save lives and ensure children like Koali's daughter can grow up safely in their own communities. She should not have to grow up without her father.

Thank you for caring for the next generation.

Sincerely,
Robert Grilho Sr

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February 17, 2026

Rep. Darius K. Kila,, Chair
Rep. Tyson K. Miyake, Vice Chair
Committee on Transportation
House of Representatives
33rd Legislature, State of Hawai'i

via: <http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov>

Dear Committee leadership and members,

Re: **COMMENTS ON HB2589 RELATING TO DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENCE**

DATE: February 19, 2026 TIME: 9:00 PM

PLACE: Conference Room 430 & Videoconference

This bill proposes to amend the HRS § 286-136 (“Penalties”) for a second conviction within five years for violation of drivers licensing statutes, including, section 286-102 (“Licensing”), §286-122 (“suspension of a license; surrender”), §286-130 (“no operation under foreign license during revocation of suspension in this State”), §286-131 (“Unlawful use of license”), §286-132 (“Driving while license suspended or revoked”), §286-133 (“Unlawful to permit unauthorized person to drive”), or §286-134 (Employing unlicensed driver”)and proposes a new provision: “The defendant shall be guilty of a class A felony and sentenced pursuant to section 706-659 if the defendant's action results in the death of another person.”

I agree wholeheartedly with the presumed intent of this proposed legislation. However, please consider that the fact of not having a license is not what causes death or injury; a person’s negligent and/or reckless operation of a vehicle does. I respectfully suggest that the intent of the proposed bill is best and properly manifested by amending the “Criminal Homicide” statutes codified at §§707-702.5 through §707-706, all of which deal with death or injury by vehicle. May I suggest the following (deletions appear bracketed with strike-thru; new provision is underlined):

§707-702.5 [~~Negligent~~] Vehicular homicide in the first degree. (1) A person commits the offense of [~~negligent~~] vehicular homicide in the first degree if that person causes the death of:

- (a) Another person by the operation of a vehicle in a negligent manner while under the influence of drugs or alcohol; [~~or~~]
- (b) A vulnerable user by the operation of a vehicle in a negligent manner; or

(c) Another person by operation of a vehicle in a reckless manner.

~~(2) A person who violates [subsection (1)(a)] this section [shall be guilty of a class B felony; provided that the person] shall be guilty of a class A felony. [when the person:~~

~~(a) Has been convicted one or more times for the offense of operating a vehicle under the influence within fifteen years of the instant offense;~~

~~(b) Is, at the time of the instant offense, engaging in conduct that would constitute a violation of section 291E-62; or~~

~~(c) Is a highly intoxicated driver as defined by section 291E-1.]~~

~~(3) [A person who violates subsection (1)(b) shall be guilty of a class B felony.] As part of the person's sentencing, the court may order that the vehicle used by the person in the commission of the offense be subject to forfeiture under chapter 712A. In such cases, the proceeds of any sale shall be deposited into the county's safe routes to school program.~~

~~(4) Notwithstanding sections 706-620(2), 706-640, 706-641, 706-659, and any other law to the contrary, the sentencing court may impose a lesser sentence for a person convicted of a class A felony under this section if the court finds that strong mitigating circumstances warrant the action. Strong mitigating circumstances shall include but not be limited to the provisions of section 706-621. The court shall provide a written opinion stating its reasons for imposing the lesser sentence.~~

~~(5) For the purposes of this section, a person "has been convicted one or more times for the offense of operating a vehicle under the influence" if the person has one or more:~~

~~(a) Convictions under section 291E-4(a), 291E-61, 291E-61.5, or 291E-64;~~

~~(b) Convictions in any other state or federal jurisdiction for an offense that is comparable to operating or being in physical control of a vehicle while having either an unlawful alcohol concentration or an unlawful drug content in the blood or urine or while under the influence of an intoxicant or habitually operating a vehicle under the influence of an intoxicant; or~~

~~(c) Adjudications of a minor for a law violation that, if committed by an adult, would constitute a violation of section 291E-4(a), 291E-61, or 291E-61.5, that, at the time of the instant offense, had not been expunged by pardon, reversed, or set aside. All convictions that have been expunged by pardon, reversed, or set aside before the instant offense shall not be deemed prior convictions for the purposes of this section.]~~

Finally, it is important to provide a definition of "vehicle," possibly an amended version of § 286-2, "'Vehicle' means every device in, upon, or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway, but excludes devices moved exclusively by human power or devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks. [~~and mopeds.~~]"

The aforementioned §707-3 through § 707-706 in Part II of chapter 707 would require similar appropriate amendment.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,

/s/ Georgette A. Yaindl
GEORGETTE ANNE YAINDL

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:06:26 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Elijah Werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:08:14 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Johnny Werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:10:27 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mary Werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I fully support this bill

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:20:22 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ed werner	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Ed Werner, community advocate for safe communities, especially roadways in Hawaii. I am in SUPPORT of this bill.

However, may it be known that any conviction, whether it is the first, second, third or whatever, of an individual who operates a motor vehicle and does not possess a valid driver's license which results in the death of another person should be charged as a Felony Class A. There is no justification for driving if an individual does not possess a valid driver's license.

It is unlawful to drive without a license and to take someone's life while doing so is 100% reckless. I highly urge you to consider elevating this crime to ensure the punishment fits the crime.

Mahalo for hearing this measure!

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 8:47:05 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Rusti Iaea	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

My loving brother, Koali Denning-Ring, died in a preventable car crash in Haleiwa in September of 2025. As I grieve, I seek healing through advocacy—for him, and for the community he loved so much.

Please help establish stricter laws that impose increased penalties and jail time for unlicensed drivers. Drivers driving without a license who kill innocent people should be locked up and throw away the key. Police presence to catch these reckless drivers with no regard for human life is needed to enforce laws. These actions would honor Koali's memory and protect other families from unimaginable loss.

My brother did not deserve to die this horrible death. His crash was unsurvivable. He was a caring brother and took care of us when my mom had to work long hours. He was my protector and he saved me from getting run over by a speeder in the Target parking lot. He was respectful and mindful and helped anyone who needed him. Who is going to care for me and protect me now? Please make sure this does not happen to any other family again.

Thank you for hearing my plea for justice and safety.

With heartfelt appreciation,
Rusti Iaea

a grieving sister

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 2589

Driving Without a License as a Class A Felony When It Results in Death

Submitted By:

Shannon Denning

Respectfully Submitted to the Hawai'i Legislature

February 17, 2026

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing today in **strong support of House Bill 2589**, which would elevate the offense of *driving without a license resulting in another person's death to a Class A felony*, and increase the jail sentence for those who choose to drive illegally and cause the loss of life.

Traffic fatalities remain a serious public health and safety crisis both here in Hawai'i and across the United States. Preliminary data show that *Hawai'i experienced a troubling rise in traffic deaths in 2025*, with **129 traffic fatalities statewide — the highest number in nearly two decades and more than a 20 % increase over 2024** (Civilbeat, January 13, 2026). Nationally, despite some declines in the first half of 2025 — with an estimated **17,140 motor vehicle deaths through June — traffic deaths remain far too high** and continue to take far too many lives (NHTSA).

Unlicensed drivers pose a significant risk on our roads. Federal safety data show that a *large share of fatal crashes involve drivers who were not properly licensed*. According to analyses of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data, a significant percentage of motorists involved in fatal crashes are unlicensed or invalidly licensed, and unlicensed drivers account for thousands of fatal crashes nationwide (claims.com). Other studies have found that *nearly one in five fatal motor vehicle crashes involve unlicensed drivers (frantslawgroup.com)*. National research over multiple years confirms similar patterns where states with higher proportions of fatal crashes involving unlicensed drivers also have elevated pedestrian deaths and serious injuries — underscoring that *driving without authorization is not a victimless offense, but one with widespread consequences (cogoinsurance.com)*.

Too often, the devastating consequences of these tragedies are borne by innocent families. I share this testimony with a heartbreak that no parent should ever endure.

On **September 24th, 2025**, my beloved son, **Koali Denning-Ring**, was **killed in a senseless crash in Haleiwa on his way to work**. Koali was a *loving and respectful son, a skilled mechanic with a thriving career as a heavy equipment diesel engine mechanic, and the sole provider for his young family*. His heart overflowed with generosity — *he helped anyone who needed it and would give the shirt off his back to a stranger*. His legacy lives on in his *2-year-old daughter, whom he cherished more than anything*, and the countless lives he touched.

There are no words to describe the **immense pain and heartache** of losing a son, a father, a brother, a grandson, and a friend — *due to traffic violence*. Every day since that tragedy has

been marked by an emptiness no sentence or penalty could ever fill. But I also know that **our community cannot afford to wait for another family to suffer as ours has.**

HB 2589 is a necessary and just step in holding accountable those who flagrantly violate the law and, in doing so, take another life. Elevating the crime of driving without a license to a Class A felony in cases resulting in death sends a clear message: *Our families, our loved ones, and our community members deserve better protection under the law.*

We know from National safety reports that *a significant percentage — around 18 % — of unlicensed drivers are involved in fatal collisions*, and these are preventable tragedies that devastate families and communities (frantzlawgroup.com). However, traffic deaths caused by an unlicensed driver in Hawaii was 25% which is above the National rate. HB 2589 will *enhance deterrence, underscore the seriousness of unlicensed driving, and provide families a greater sense of justice when the unthinkable occurs.*

For these reasons, I respectfully urge this Committee to **support HB 2589** and help protect future generations from the pain my family now carries.

Mahalo nui loa for your time, your consideration, and your service.

Respectfully,

Shannon Mauna'ala Denning

A mother grieving the loss of her beloved son

Works Cited

<https://www.civilbeat.org/2026/01/2025-hawaii-road-deaths-hit-18-year-peak/>

<https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-reports-sharp-drop-traffic-fatalities-first-half-2025>

<https://usclaims.com/educational-resources/non-licensed-drivers-responsible-for-20-percent-of-all-auto-accidents/?amp>

<https://www.frantzlawgroup.com/blog/car-accidents-involving-an-unlicensed-driver-every-thing-you-need-to-know/>

<https://cogoinsurance.com/non-domiciled-cdl-drivers/>

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 9:59:13 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Irene Chillingworth	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

My great grandson, Koali Denning-Ring, was killed in a car accident in Haleiwa in September 2025. He was a devoted father, partner and community member. His death has shattered our family and exposed a severe safety issue on the North Shore and this state.

I ask the state to prioritize traffic safety through stricter penalties for unlicensed drivers and visible police patrols. Increasing jail sentences for those caught driving without a license but most especially for unlicensed drivers who cause vehicular homicide. These measures can prevent another family member or friend from enduring what I now live through daily.

Sincerley, Irene Chillingworth

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/17/2026 11:17:18 PM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shermaih IAEA IV	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Written Testimony in Support of HB 2589 Increasing Penalties for Unlicensed Drivers

Dear House of Representatives,

The loss of my beloved son, Koali Denning-Ring, in a Haleiwa car crash last year had a devastation that no father should ever endure. But what troubles me most is that this tragedy was avoidable. Unlicensed drivers reckless driving continue daily on Joseph P. Leong Bypass Road and all of Hawai'i's roadways.

I am asking the state take bold action—impose stricter penalties including increasing jail sentences on unlicensed drivers especially if their traffic crime involves a homicide to remind drivers of their responsibility. In addition, increasing police presence to enforce the laws of the road to prevent unlicensed drivers from killing innocent people. Let Hawai'i lead by example in road safety reform.

My son was a respectful, responsible, mindful gentleman with a heart of gold. He was the smartest most talented person I know. I am a car enthusiast and an avid fisherman which I enjoyed as a hobby and as a professional sports fisherman. My son by far was the best mechanic and fisherman ever. He did everything right in his short life and gave us no problems. He had a full life ahead of him but it was cut short. He was a doting dad and caring partner, and he accomplished more in his short adult life than most people double his age. A prime example of his achievements is he earned a career as a professional heavy equipment diesel engine mechanic without a degree and previous experience. It was largely based on his intelligence, skills, and his drive to be the best at his trade. He tested top 2 out of over 800 applicants in his Local 3 Operator's Engineering testing. His motivating force behind his accomplishments was loving and providing for his 2 year daughter and partner and making his family proud.

This senseless tragedy brought me a heartache that is incomprehensible. If there is one last thing that I could do for my loving son is to fully support HB 2589 in honor of the boy who is not biologically mine but I raised and loved like my own. I am in great despair and sorrow over the tragic loss of my dear child.

Thank you for helping turn pain into purpose

Respectfully,

Shermaih Iaea IV

HB-2589

Submitted on: 2/18/2026 8:07:21 AM

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

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Robert K. Barrett	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear House of Representatives,

My nephew Koali Denning-Ring, was killed in a car accident in Haleiwa on September of 2025. He was a devoted father, partner, and community member. His death has shattered our family and exposed a severe safety issue on the North Shore and this state.

I ask the state to prioritize traffic safety through stricter penalties for unlicensed drivers and visible police patrols. Increasing jail sentences for those caught driving without a license but most especially for unlicensed drivers who cause vehicular homicide. These measures can prevent another family member or friend from enduring what I now live through daily.

For Koali and for every family who calls Hawai'i home—please act.

With gratitude,

Mr. Robert Barrett