

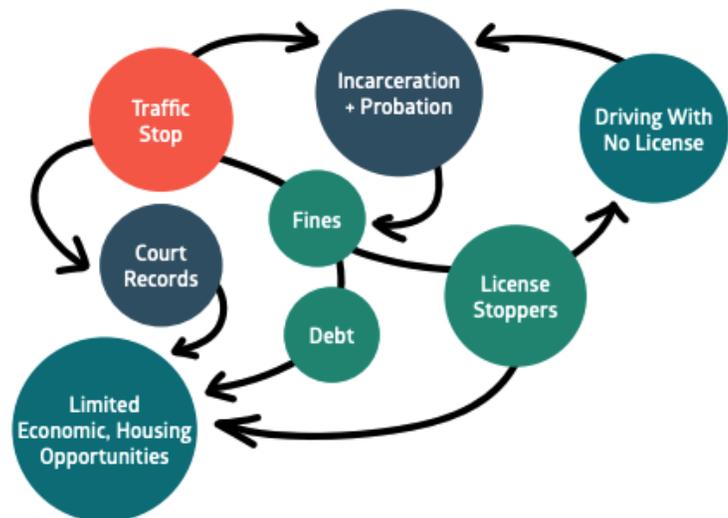


Testimony for Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Support for SB2146 - Relating to Traffic Infractions
Committee on Transportation (TRN)
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 9:30AM

Dear Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, and members of the TRN committees,
Mahalo for the opportunity to express **SUPPORT for SB2146**, which would establish a Traffic Fines Task Force to examine the Finnish tiered traffic fines system and determine whether a similar system could be implemented in the State of Hawai'i.

Traffic stops are often framed as minor or routine interactions. In reality, they can serve as entry points into a web of interrelated consequences that extend far beyond the initial citation. The financial impacts of traffic citations can be particularly burdensome for low-income individuals. A single traffic ticket can impose significant financial strain on those who are already struggling to make ends meet, often leading to a cascade of missed payments and debt.

How Traffic Stops Can Lead to Cycles of Poverty



For example, unpaid tickets are typically sent to debt collectors, which can lead to damage to an individual's credit score. Debt collectors can also add collection fees and interest to the original ticket amount, which can make it even more challenging to pay the ticket off. If left unpaid, debt can lead to legal consequences (such as potential court appearances and wage garnishment), difficulty in obtaining government services (such as vehicle registration), as well as negative impacts to employment and housing opportunities, as some employers and landlords conduct credit checks as part of the application process.

As such, traffic fines can exacerbate economic hardship, pushing families deeper into debt and making it more difficult for them to meet basic needs. For example, a 2018 Alabama Appleseed report found that 38 percent of people with fines for violations such as low-level vehicle infractions and non-payment of exorbitant court fees ended up committing more serious crimes, such as selling drugs, illegal sex work, or

robbery, to raise the needed money.¹ This reflects a troubling cycle where minor infractions can escalate into more serious criminal behavior, driven by financial desperation.

In early 2025, Hawai'i Appleseed released a policy report, *Beyond the Ticket*, which examined the negative impacts of traffic enforcement and provided recommendations for a more equitable approach to roadway enforcement.² The report included a recommendation – similar to SB2146 – to explore the implementation of a traffic fines and fees system based on income, instead of using flat fees. This not only ensures that penalties are equitable, but also maintains compliance by making fines manageable for all.

Ultimately the task force resulting from SB2146 could lead to implementing strategies that would:

- Shift away from enforcement practices that prioritize punishment over safety;
- Reduce the risk of unnecessary criminalization stemming from minor traffic violations; and
- Provide a more proportional and humane approach to traffic enforcement that reflects Hawai'i's values.

In summary, traffic enforcement, particularly for minor infractions, should not be a pathway to poverty or instability. SB2146 is a thoughtful, evidence-based reform that acknowledges the real-world consequences of traffic stops and seeks to reduce preventable harm while maintaining public safety.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this important measure.



Abbey Seitz
Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice
Director of Transportation Equity

¹ Nelson, Leah, Frank Knaack and Dana Sweeney, "Under Pressure: How fines and fees hurt people, undermine public safety, and drive Alabama's racial wealth divide," Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, 2018. <https://alabamaappleseed.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/AA1240-FinesandFees10-10-FINAL.pdf>

² Seitz, A. and Gilliam, T. "Beyond the Ticket: Recommendations for a More Equitable Traffic Enforcement System," Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, March 2025. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/601374ae84e51e430a1829d8/t/67c0cf0aceba832254eb5391/1740689172475/Beyond+The+Ticket_FINAL.pdf



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HOUSE COMMITTEE on TRANSPORTATION
Tuesday - March 17, 2026- 9:30am

Hawai'i Bicycling League Strongly Supports SB 2146, SD1, relating to Traffic Infractions

Aloha Chair Kila, Vice Chair Miyake, 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 SB 2146, SD2, to study how a tiered structure for speeding infractions, like one used in Finland, can create a more robust and equitable system to deter speeding. As vulnerable road users, people who bike are disproportionately affected by speeding vehicles, and too often are seriously injured or killed. Speeding remains one of the most difficult driver behaviors to curtail, accounting for 30%, or 12,000 of all the traffic fatalities nationwide in 2023, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

But that same year speed was a factor in 58% of Hawai'i traffic fatalities — the highest in the country by 13 percentage points above Rhode Island. In 2025, Hawai'i had the deadliest year in decades on our roadways. Meanwhile in 2024, Helsinki, the capital of Finland, with a population of nearly 700,000 residents went a full year without a single traffic fatality. They did this through a combination of methods, including slowing allowable speeds and a tiered traffic infraction system that incentivizes drivers to slow down.

In Hawai'i, we have adopted Vision Zero as a traffic safety goal at the State and County levels, but we are not realizing the intended goals. Studying the model that Finland uses could raise awareness for all road users about the need to better manage speeding, as well as identify practical solutions that Hawai'i can implement for safer outcomes.

I urge you to pass SB 2146, SD2 and move it along for further consideration this legislative session.

Mahalo for the opportunity to share testimony on this important public safety matter..

S/Eduardo Hernandez

Eduardo Hernandez
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Bicycling League

SB-2146-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2026 5:12:54 PM

Testimony for TRN on 3/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

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

Comments:

I, Johnnie-Mae L. Perry, Support w/comment to consider the "WEIGHT" of the vehicle vs flat rate, whichever is HIGHER

2146 SB RELATING TO TRAFFIC INFRACTIONS.

SB-2146-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/14/2026 6:28:28 PM

Testimony for TRN on 3/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jonathan Huynh	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support of SB2146 SD1, which establishes a task force to study income-proportional traffic fines for Hawaii. This legislation represents a critical step toward creating more effective traffic enforcement that protects all road users, regardless of the violator's income level.

Currently, Hawaii's flat fine system creates a two-tiered justice system where wealthy drivers can repeatedly endanger others with minimal financial consequence, while low-income drivers face potentially devastating financial penalties for similar violations. This inequity undermines roadway safety and perpetuates economic injustice.

The Finnish model demonstrates that income-based fines can create more equitable and effective traffic enforcement. When fines represent a meaningful portion of income, they serve as genuine deterrents that encourage safer driving behavior across all socioeconomic groups.

I recommend several amendments to strengthen this important legislation:

1. Expand task force membership to include pedestrian, bicycle, public health, and senior citizen representatives who can speak to traffic safety impacts.
2. Explicitly connect to transportation safety goals by requiring analysis of how proportional fines support Vision Zero and reduce traffic fatalities. Add a provision requiring
3. Establish implementation expectations with timelines for legislative action on task force recommendations.
 - o The legislature to hold hearings on task force recommendations within 60 days of submission.
 - o Introduction of implementation legislation by the 2028 session if recommendations are favorable.
 - o Annual progress reports on implementation status.
4. Increase funding to \$50,000 to ensure comprehensive analysis and meaningful stakeholder engagement:
 - o Data collection and analysis costs.
 - o Public outreach and testimony gathering.
 - o Expert consultation on fine system design.
 - o Economic impact analysis.

Traffic violence is a public health crisis that disproportionately affects vulnerable road users—pedestrians, cyclists, children, seniors, and low-income communities. By creating a more effective deterrent system, this legislation can help reduce speeding, prevent crashes, and save lives.

I respectfully urge your support of SB2146 SD1 with these amendments to create a more just and effective traffic enforcement system for Hawaii.

Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2146-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 9:24:47 AM

Testimony for TRN on 3/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jessica Kuzmier	Individual	Comments	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, I am offering testimony on SB2146. Although the bill's intentions are good, I'm hoping that when the study is implemented, it will take into considerations such as privacy and data sharing. Procuring income data is a sensitive issue and will require a great deal of networking, which would result in a lot of harvesting of electronic and sensitive data that could compromise many aspects of an individual including their identity. Concerns about data privacy must be taken into consideration. Additionally, as many people might not have local addresses, and perhaps even international ones, this opens up a quagmire of confusion to navigate federal and international databases of sensitive data. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2146-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2026 1:18:31 PM

Testimony for TRN on 3/17/2026 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daphne L. Manago	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support HB 1523 which would amend Section 291C-33, HRS and remove reference to countdown timers, including the requirement that pedestrians must begin crossing a roadway before a countdown timer begins.