

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

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 2699, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

BEFORE THE:

SENATE COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORTATION AND ON ENERGY AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026 **TIME:** 3:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 229

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Marjorie A. Lau, Deputy Attorney General

Chairs Inouye and Wakai and Members of the Committees:

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

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish within the Department of Transportation (HDOT) a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; (2) establish a fare-free youth transit program special fund (FFYTP Special Fund); (3) require biannual evaluations of the new program and FFYTP Special Fund; (4) allocate moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax (Tax) to the FFYTP Special Fund; and (5) appropriate moneys into and out of the FFYTP Special Fund.

In section 1, the bill describes the need to provide access to a universal fare-free transit program for all children through high school age. The bill states the Legislature's belief that a universal fare-free transit program would eliminate barriers to public transit and reduce family transportation costs, and that increasing transit ridership will support the State's emission reduction goals. Additionally, the Legislature finds that the proposed program is directly relevant to the State's environmental goals and is an appropriate use of funds from the Tax imposed pursuant to section 243-3.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS). The Tax is imposed upon petroleum product and fossil fuel sold by a distributor to any retail dealer or end user.

Section -3 of the new HRS chapter added by section 2 of the bill on page 8, line 1, to page 9, line 15, establishes the FFYTP Special Fund to be administered by the HDOT Director of Transportation. The bill provides that deposits into the FFYTP Special Fund may include (1) the portion of the Tax specified under section 243-3.5(a)(6), HRS, (2) moneys appropriated to the FFYTP Special Fund by the Legislature; and (3) investment earnings, gifts, donations, or other income received by HDOT.

The Department has concerns that the fund may not meet all of the requirements of section 37-52.3, HRS, which provides that special funds shall: (1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose and scope of the program and an explanation of why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; (2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon program users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; (3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; and (4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining.

While the bill describes the purpose and program intended to be funded, at least in part, by the FFYTP Special Fund, this bill does not describe why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity that is used only when essential to the successful operation of the program or activity; or demonstrate how the initiative will be financially self-sustaining.

We strongly recommend adding provisions to this bill that explain how the FFYTP Special Fund meets the criteria for the establishment of a special fund as required by section 37-52.3, HRS.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.



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

Date: 02/05/2026

Time: 03:00 PM

Location: CR 229 & Videoconference

Committee: TRS/EIG

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Keith T. Hayashi, Superintendent of Education

Title of Bill: SB2699, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

Purpose of Bill: Establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Establishes a fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund. Allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature.

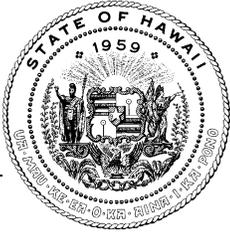
Department's Position:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (Department) supports SB2699, establishing a fare-free youth transit program coordinated with the counties statewide.

Although public transit options vary from county to county, SB 2699 is a broad approach to serving Hawaii's youth population by improving access to school, extracurricular activities, and work opportunities. It also aligns with Hawaii's climate goals and supports the state's commitments under Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) §§ 225P-5 and 225P-8 by reducing emissions and reliance on single-occupancy vehicles.

SB 2699 responsibly identifies a stable funding source through the environmental response, energy, and food security tax, aligning this program with the tax's purpose and the state's decarbonization commitments, including those outlined in the Department of Transportation's 2025 Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan.

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



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Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
**SENATE COMMITTEES ON
TRANSPORTATION
AND
ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Thursday, February 05, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on
SENATE BILL NO. 2699

RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT.

Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members of the Committees, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers the following comments on Senate Bill No. 2699, which establishes a fare-free youth transit program within the Hawai'i Department of Transportation in coordination with county transit services, to be paid by an increase in the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

HSEO appreciates the Legislature's continued focus on improving access to affordable, equitable transportation options for Hawai'i's residents, particularly children and youth. Transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and policies that expand access to efficient, shared transportation modes can play an important role in advancing the State's long-term energy and climate objectives.

Hawai'i has established ambitious statutory goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by fifty percent by 2030 and achieve net negative emissions by 2045. Increasing public transit use, especially for routine trips such as school, extracurricular activities and community services, is among a portfolio of strategies needed to achieve

those goals, which also include reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improved system efficiency, and expanded access to low- and zero-emission mobility options.

HSEO's 2023 *Pathways to Decarbonization* Report emphasizes that reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel, particularly for short and frequent trips, is an important complement to vehicle electrification. The report highlights land use, travel behavior, and access to shared transportation as key drivers of transportation energy demand. Programs that lower barriers to transit use for youth and families can shape long-term travel patterns while providing household cost savings and mobility benefits.

HSEO also notes that transportation mode choice depends on factors beyond fare levels, including service frequency, reliability, travel time, safety, and connectivity. Data collection and evaluation are needed to understand how fare-free transit affects ridership, system performance, and emissions and to inform future policy decisions. Accordingly, HSEO appreciates the bill's emphasis on data-driven evaluation.

Finally, HSEO recognizes that youth access to transit supports broader state priorities related to equity, public health, and safety. For households facing transportation cost burdens or limited access to private vehicles, reliable transit can improve access to education, employment, and essential services, while coordinated statewide approaches may reduce administrative complexity and improve consistency across county systems.

HSEO defers to the Department of Budget and Finance on the budgetary impact of redistribution of the environmental response, energy, and food security tax funds.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

JOSH GREEN M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LT. GOVERNOR



GARY S. SUGANUMA
DIRECTOR

KRISTEN M.R. SAKAMOTO
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION
Ka 'Oihana 'Auhau
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**TESTIMONY OF
GARY S. SUGANUMA, DIRECTOR OF TAXATION**

TESTIMONY ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. No. 2699, Relating to Public Transit

BEFORE THE:

Senate Committees on Transportation, and Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

DATE: Thursday, February 5, 2026
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
LOCATION: State Capitol, Conference Room 229

Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice-Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members of the Committees:

The Department of Taxation (DOTAX) offers the following comments regarding S.B. 2699 for your consideration.

S.B. 2699 establishes within the Department of Transportation (HDOT) a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties, and a fare-free youth transit program special fund. It also allocates monies from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax ("barrel tax") to this fund, appropriates monies into and out of this fund, and requires HDOT to submit reports to the Legislature.

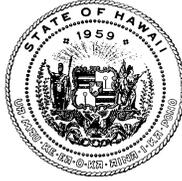
Section 3 of the bill amends section 243-3.5(a)-(b), HRS, prescribing new allocations from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax. Specifically, it allocates 38 cents out of the existing \$1.05 per barrel tax on petroleum products and 36.8 per cent of the tax on each one million British thermal units on non-petroleum fossil fuels to the special fund.

The bill is effective upon approval, except for Sections 5 and 6, which take effect on July 1, 2026.

DOTAX notes that the bill's reference to "section 243-3.5(6)" under section _-3 on page 8, line 6 may be a typo, as this bill would be amending new subsection 243-3.5(a)(6).

DOTAX recommends that the effective date for section 3 of the bill be amended to July 1, 2026, to provide sufficient time for changes necessary to implement the amended allocations from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

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



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
KA 'ŌIHANA OLAKINO
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**Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. 2699
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT**

SENATOR LORRAINE R. INOUE, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

SENATOR GLENN WAKAI, CHAIR
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Hearing Date: February 5, 2026, 3:00 PM Room Number: Conference Room 229
and 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 provides comments on the public health implications of House
- 4 Bill 1879 (H.B. 1879), which establishes within the DOT a fare-free youth transit program to be
- 5 coordinated with the counties. The measure also establishes a fare-free youth transit program
- 6 special fund, requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, and allocates
- 7 moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth
- 8 transit program special fund.

- 9 **Department Testimony:** Despite Hawaii's favorable climate, geography, and reputation for
- 10 active outdoor living, only 33% of adult and 18% of high school students in Hawaii met federal
- 11 guidelines for physical activity.^{1,2} The design of roads that integrate active transportation
- 12 options like walking, bicycling, and transit is a public health concern since the safety and

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

² 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

1 accessibility of a community's built environment can promote or hinder physical activity. This
2 includes removing barriers to safely and conveniently accessing active transportation options to
3 destinations such as schools, shopping, and worksites. Safe, accessible, and walkable
4 communities encourage physical activity and can promote better health outcomes in
5 communities whose populations are at less risk for serious chronic diseases and conditions such
6 as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.³

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

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

³ CDC *About Physical Activity*. 2021.

⁴ 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/>

⁵ 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

1 youth will yield dividends for generations to come, creating a more sustainable, and healthy
2 Hawaii.

3 **Offered Amendments:** None

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

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

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR | KA HOPE KIA'ĀINA



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAII'
DEPARTMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
KA 'OIHANA KUMUWAIWAI 'ĀINA

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DAWN N.S. CHANG
CHAIRPERSON
BOARD OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
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RYAN K.P. KANAKA'OLE
FIRST DEPUTY

CIARA W.K. KAHAHANE
DEPUTY DIRECTOR - WATER

AQUATIC RESOURCES
BOATING AND OCEAN RECREATION
BUREAU OF CONVEYANCES
COMMISSION ON WATER RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
CONSERVATION AND COASTAL LANDS
CONSERVATION AND RESOURCES
ENFORCEMENT
ENGINEERING
FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KAHOOLAWE ISLAND RESERVE COMMISSION
LAND
STATE PARKS

**Testimony of
LEAH LARAMEE
Climate Change Coordinator on behalf of
Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission
Co-Chair Ryan K. P. Kanaka'ole**

**Before the Senate Committees on
TRANSPORTATION
AND
ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 229 and Via Videoconference**

**In consideration of
SENATE BILL 2699**

RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS.

Senate Bill 2699 establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program and special fund, to be coordinated with the counties. The bill allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund and moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature and biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund. **The Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission (Commission) supports this measure.**

The Commission consists of a multi-jurisdictional effort between 20 departments, committees, and counties with the purpose of promoting ambitious, climate-neutral, culturally responsive strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The cost of living in Hawai'i continues to balloon, leaving many residents struggling to meet everyday needs such as transportation. The keiki ride free initiative will help to alleviate that burden by eliminating fares for children already riding the bus or providing an alternative to navigating congested streets at no extra cost.

Projected increases in bus ridership will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing vehicle miles traveled. In the first year alone, the program is expected to eliminate 12,828,310

miles driven by cars. Over 20 years that number could rise to 256,566,209 miles. These studies show that riding the bus as a youth encourages use of public transportation as adults. This bolsters ridership, while reducing congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.^[1]

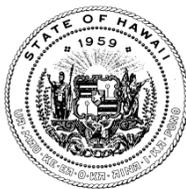
Free student fares aligns with the State's climate goals, reducing emissions while improving transit systems. The keiki ride free program is estimated to reduce emissions by 61,469 metric tons of carbon dioxide over 20 years, the equivalent of taking 13,000 cars off the road.

The keiki ride free program improves affordability, grows the next generation of transportation users and helps to reduce emissions leaving cleaner air and safer streets for all.

Mahalo for the opportunity to comment on this measure.

^[1] <https://www.theenergymix.com/opinion-want-stronger-public-transport-and-better-communities-get-youth-hooked-on-transit/>

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



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

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

LATE

Thursday, February 5, 2026
3:00 PM
State Capitol, 229

SB2699
RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

Senate Committees on Transportation and Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

The Department of Transportation (DOT) strongly supports Senate Bill 2699.

This measure would establish a fare-free public transit program for youth statewide, reducing cost barriers for families and providing an equitable and affordable transportation option for Hawai'i's keiki. By encouraging transit use among youth, the bill supports reduced congestion and emissions while helping foster lifelong use of sustainable transportation options.

The DOT has met with all county transit agencies regarding this proposal. Counties expressed support for a cohesive, statewide youth transit program and a willingness to coordinate implementation, provided adequate and sustainable funding is in place. The DOT values its ongoing collaborative partnerships with the counties, which are essential to maintaining a safe, efficient, and seamlessly connected transportation system.

The DOT supports the use of existing environmental response, energy, and food security tax revenues as a sustainable funding source and the requirement for the program be evaluated and reported on an annual basis. Regular review will allow the State to monitor effectiveness, assess fiscal sustainability and equity outcomes, and make timely recommendations to the Legislature to ensure the transportation needs of Hawai'i's youth and families—particularly low- and moderate-income households—are being met.

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

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA LAWELAWE 'ŌHUA
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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Phone: (808) 768-8305 • Fax: (808) 768-4730 • Website: honolulu.gov/transportation

LATE



J. ROGER MORTON
DIRECTOR
PO'O

HONGLONG LI, Ph.D, P.E.
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
HOPE PO'O

TESTIMONY OF J. ROGER MORTON
DIRECTOR OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
Thursday, February 5, 2026, 3:00 PM
Conference RM 229 and Via Videoconference

TO: Sen. Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair, Sen. Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair, and
Members of the Committee on Transportation

Sen. Glenn Wakai, Chair, Sen. Stanley Chang, Vice Chair, and Members of the
Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

RE: SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 2699, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT, WITH
RECOMMENDED AMENDMENTS

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members
of the Committee on Transportation and the Committee on Energy and
Intergovernmental Affairs. My name is J. Roger Morton, and I serve as the Director of
the Department of Transportation Services (DTS) for the City and County of Honolulu.

DTS strongly supports SB 2699, which would establish and fund a statewide
Fare-Free Youth Transit Program administered by the Hawai'i Department of
Transportation (HDOT), to reimburse county transit agencies for providing fare-free
public transportation service to eligible youth riders. O'ahu is home to approximately
200,000 children and youth (under 18), representing the largest concentration of eligible
riders in the State and a major opportunity for statewide transportation, climate, and
affordability goals. From a transportation policy standpoint, the single best way to build
long-term transit ridership is to expose residents to public transportation at an early
age—when travel habits are being formed and before dependency on private vehicle
travel becomes entrenched. DTS is committed to partnering closely with HDOT to
implement this program quickly, efficiently, and with strong accountability.

1) Add explicit language requiring that HDOT awards shall fully reimburse
county transit agencies for foregone youth fare revenues (or reimburse according to a
defined formula), and not as an unfunded or partially funded mandate.

Senate Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs
S.B. No. 2699, RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT
February 5, 2026

2) Require the use of HOLO or another auditable credential. To ensure accountability and program integrity, fare-free rides should be administered through HOLO or another auditable credentialing method. It is noted that Skyline requires electronic media for entry. DTS and HDOT are currently exploring expansion of HOLO statewide and are actively coordinating with the other counties to enable broader interoperability and consistent fare policy administration. If a statewide fare-free youth program is implemented, DTS will work collaboratively with HDOT to simplify eligibility verification and HOLO issuance so the program can be effectively monitored and evaluated.

3) Confirm that eligible program expenses include both actual operations and implementation expenses. DTS recommends adding language making clear that HDOT awards may cover not only foregone fare revenues, but also the eligible costs required to implement the program successfully.

4) Recognize that public transportation is distinct from traditional school bus service. Transit provides mobility to all. It should not be considered an end all or a substitute for school buses where transit is not feasible. Moreover, under federal law, transit agencies are prohibited from providing exclusive service to schools.

S.B. No 2699 represents a forward-looking policy that will expand opportunity for Hawai'i's youth while strengthening long-term ridership and reducing dependence on private vehicles. DTS appreciates HDOT's leadership and is ready to work collaboratively to implement this program in a way that is efficient, equitable, auditable, and financially sustainable. For these reasons, DTS supports S.B. No 2699 and respectfully requests the Committee consider the recommended amendments.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony with recommended amendments.



**Testimony in Support for SB2699 - Relating to Public Transit
Senate Committee on Transportation (TRS) and
Committee on Energy And Intergovernmental Affairs (EIG)
Thursday, February 5th, 2026 at 3PM**

Dear Chairs, Vice Chairs, and members of the joint TRS/EIG committee,
Mahalo for the opportunity to **testify in strong support of HB1879**, which would establish a two-year “Keiki Ride Free” Pilot Program to provide year-round, fare-free public transit access for those aged 18 and under in Hawai‘i.

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.¹

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.² 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.

¹ 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/>.

² 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.³ Under Bill 54, youth monthly and annual passes will increase by 12.5 percent, costing nearly \$500 per year.⁴

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 – like that being proposed under HB1879 – would create consistent access for youth, reduce administrative burden, 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.⁵ 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.⁶

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.

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Ibid.



HAWAI'I YOUTH TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

HYTC Testimony for the Senate Committee(s) on
TRANSPORTATION

ENERGY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

SB 2699 | Thursday, February 5, 2026

IN STRONG SUPPORT

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Committee Members,

Mahalo for the chance to testify at today's hearing. **Keiki Ride Free is a bill that we are deeply passionate about as a council.** It makes Hawai'i **more affordable**, gives more **youth access to their community**, **enables homeless youth to attend school**, enables **flexible emergency management plans**, and so much more.

In our inaugural year as a council, the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council has sought to incorporate youth voices, affordability, the state climate targets, and strategies from HDOT's Energy Security and Waste Reduction proposal into some form of advocacy. **Keiki Ride Free is the culmination of that work**, with the support of our HDOT advisors and countless meetings, phone calls, and outreach events with Earth Justice, HiPHI, Hawai'i Apple Seed, and Our Children's Trust. Most importantly, this bill is nothing without the **monumental support of the countless youth organizations and individuals** who see its promise and have worked tirelessly to help us advocate for it.

Keiki Ride Free **enhances opportunities for youth**, regardless of where they live, by giving them access to jobs, community events, reliable school transportation, and the ability to advocate and participate in government. This bill **eliminates barriers in the DOE Express and current county youth programs** by eliminating minimum and maximum distance requirements, giving students a choice of school, and making it **easier than ever for Keiki to use the bus.**

While Maui and Hawai'i Counties already have fare-free transit, they are at risk of **losing it due to federal grant cuts and budgetary constraints.** Hawai'i County is now having to dig into its budget to pay for free transit services, **cutting many fixed bus routes across the island** and making it **more difficult for youth to achieve independence.** Maui County has already been using the county budget to pay for youth fare-free service for a while, but with this investment in youth, they are having to choose between **investing in new sidewalks or transit infrastructure and youth fares.**

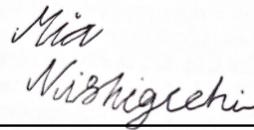
Honolulu City and County and Kauai County are not fare-free but do offer reduced fares. However, the programs they do offer are often **difficult for families to access**, requiring trips to transit centers during working hours on weekdays and the need to bring proof of identity, **leaving many hardworking and homeless families unable to access them.**

Along with this, many programs that aim to serve low-income and houseless youth **fall short in many respects**, especially because the requirements don't allow them access to these programs. The *DOE Express* Program has many stipulations, such as that a student must be a Hawai'i public school student attending middle/or intermediate or high school with an active HIDOE ID number, and must attend their home school while residing 1.5 miles or more from their school. These requirements **prohibit students who have changed schools due to bullying, students who live too close to campus, and students attending private or charter schools from accessing this program**. Additionally, the "walkzone" does not account for the safety of walking in that area or whether it is even ADA accessible.

These last few points are exactly why the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council sought to make, and now strongly advocates for, Keiki Ride Free. It allows youth, **regardless of island of residence, financial status, school of choice, or physical ability, to have access to free transportation**. Keiki Ride Free is also aimed at the **Homeless and low-income families of Hawai'i, allowing them to access a safe and reliable form of transportation free from the worry of fare hikes that would punish them just because of their financial status**.

Please, help us pass this for the youth of Hawai'i and vote in favor of SB 2699.

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





HIPHI Board

May Okihiro, MD, MS
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Department of Pediatrics

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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: Senator Lorraine R. Inouye, Chair
Senator Brandon J.C. Elefante, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Transportation

Senator Glenn Wakai, Chair
Senator Stanley Chang, Vice Chair
Members of the Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

Re: Strong Support for SB 2699, Relating To Public Transit

Hrg: February 5, 2026, at 3:00PM, Conference Room 229 & Videoconference

Hawai'i Public Health Institute (HIPHI)¹ and the Healthy Eating + Active Living² (HEAL) Statewide Coalition are in **strong support of SB 2699**, which establishes the statewide Keiki Ride Free Program to provide fare-free public transit for youth aged 18 and under.

Increasing Accessibility and Opportunity

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 pose a financial burden as the cost of living continues to rise. Keiki make up roughly 20% of our population, yet have limited mobility options and often depend entirely on caregivers for transportation, creating challenges in accessing education, social, and economic opportunities.

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.³ For young people, free access connects

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.

³ 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/>.



them to school, after-school programs, healthcare, jobs, and community, while building lifelong transit habits.

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.⁴ We should instead be making public transit free and accessible to all.

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 eligibility⁵
- Ensure students from working families just above the free school lunch thresholds are not excluded,
- Increase overall attendance, retention, and educational opportunity statewide⁶
- Reduce traffic vehicle crashes, air pollution, and associated respiratory illnesses, and increase physical activity levels⁷
- Simplify implementation and reporting for the Department of Education.

Please support SB 2699, 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.⁸

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".

Lauren Loor
Healthy Eating + Active Living Statewide Program Manager

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

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

⁵ 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>

⁶ 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>

⁷ CDC. (2026, January 14). Improving Health Through Transportation Advocacy Policy.

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

⁸ 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>.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:53:55 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dave Mulinix	Testifying for Greenpeace Hawaii	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs & Members of the Committees on TRS/EIG,

My name is Dave Mulinix, CoFounder & Hawaii State Representative of Greenpeace Hawaii, on behalf of our thousands members and supporters statewide we Stand in Strong Support for SB2699 that Establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. Establishes a fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund. Allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund. Requires reports to the Legislature.

This bill has many positive aspects, not only does it provide an experience that will teach youth that riding public transport can just as easily get them to their destination as driving an individual car. It will also help to take thousands of vehicles off our roads, reducing traffic congestion and most importantly cut Hawaii's greenhouse gas emissions to help us reach our zero emission transportation system goals.

As the Hawaii State Legislature noted in 2021 that we are already in a growing Climate Emergency. We are already experiencing the effects of the growing Climate Crisis here in Hawaii with homes on the north shore of Oahu falling in the ocean, extended drought conditions, and the global warming caused firestorm that obliterated Lahaina. This is just the beginning of the devastation we are facing if we don't make a concerted effort to get off of fossil fuels as quickly as possible.

The bill is an excellent step in the right direction to address this problem and it helps to fulfill the agreement reached in the Navahive vs HDOT settlement.

Mahalo for your kind attention.

Dave Mulinix,

Co-Founder & Hawaii State Representative

Greenpeace Hawaii



P.O. Box 392, Kilauea, Kauai, HI, 96754

PHONE: (808) 212-4765 • FAX: (808) 828-2027 • E-MAIL: bbrody1@hawaii.rr.com • WEB SITE: www.getfitkauai.com

Joint Senate Committees on Transportation and Energy & Intergovernmental Affairs
Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 3:00 PM
Testimony in Strong Support of SB2699 - Relating to Public Transit

Aloha Chairs Senator Inouye, Senator Wakai, Vice Chairs Senator Elefante, Senator Chang and members of the Transportation and Energy & Intergovernmental Affairs Committees

On behalf of Get Fit Kaua'i, I am **writing in strong support of SB2699**, which establishes a fare-free public transit program for Hawai'i's youth.

Get Fit Kaua'i is the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) coalition for Kauai County, representing over 100 members from community organizations, health systems, schools, nonprofits, local businesses, and government partners. Our coalition works to improve the health, safety, and daily well-being of Kauai residents, with a strong focus on equity, access, and community resilience. Transportation is a critical part of that work.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. For many households — especially low- and moderate-income families and those living in rural communities — transportation costs and limited school bus capacity create real barriers to education, employment, and community participation. A fare-free youth transit program directly addresses these challenges by ensuring that every young person can move safely and reliably through their community.

This measure strengthens youth independence and confidence, encourages lifelong transit habits, and expands access to opportunities that support academic success and overall well-being. It also eases the burden on school bus and public transit systems facing driver and service shortages, helping reduce student absenteeism and lost instructional time.

Importantly, SB2699 aligns with the commitments outlined in the Navahine Settlement, supporting statewide decarbonization goals by reducing emissions, decreasing vehicle miles traveled, and easing traffic congestion. Increasing youth transit ridership is a practical, equitable strategy that benefits every island.

A fare-free youth transit program is a forward-looking investment in Hawai'i's future — supporting families, strengthening our transportation systems, and advancing the state's climate and equity goals.

For these reasons, Get Fit Kaua'i respectfully urges the Committees to pass SB2699.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

BBrody

Bev Brody
Get Fit Kauai – Director
H.E.A.L. (Healthy Eating Active Living) Community Coalition of Kauai County
(808) 212-4765



Testimony of the Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization

Committee on Transportation Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs

February 5, 2026 at 3:00PM
Conference Room 229

SB2699 Relating to Public Transit

Dear Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Committees Members,

The Oahu Metropolitan Planning Organization (OahuMPO) **supports SB2699**, which would establish and appropriate funds for the Department of Transportation to create a statewide fare-free youth transit program, benefiting all residents 18 and under.

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 for 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.



Email: communications@ulupono.com

SENATE COMMITTEES ON TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY & INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
Thursday, February 5, 2026 — 3:00 p.m.

Ulupono Initiative supports SB 2699, Relating to Public Transit.

Dear Chair Inouye, Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committees:

My name is Micah Munekata, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Ulupono Initiative. We are a Hawai'i-focused impact investment firm that strives to improve the quality of life throughout the islands by helping our communities become more resilient and self-sufficient through locally produced food, renewable energy, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources.

Ulupono supports SB 2699, which establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties; establishes a fare-free youth transit program special fund; requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund; allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund; and appropriates moneys into and out of the fare-free youth transit program special fund.

Hawai'i families face some of the highest costs of living in the nation, and transportation is a significant burden. This bill would provide meaningful financial relief to families by saving more than \$500 per child per year on O'ahu alone.¹ For families where adults already pay for bus passes, this program means traveling together at no additional cost. Currently, a family of four pays \$18 per round trip on TheBus.² The program would also open new opportunities for children to independently access schools, jobs, after-school activities, and healthcare.

Fare-free youth transit can also help alleviate pressure on Hawai'i's school bus system, which continues to face significant driver shortages and route cancellations,³ For comparison, Washington State's fare-free youth program saw 15 million rides from 1.5 million youth participants. Based on this model, Hawai'i would see a minimum of 1 million additional TheBus trips annually.⁴

¹Based on the monthly anticipated rate for youth of \$45/month

²Based on roundtrip HOLO card fares: two adults at \$3 each and two youth at \$1.50 each, multiplied by two for a roundtrip; <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2026/01/28/hawaii-news/honolulu-city-council-poised-to-ok-transit-fare-increases/>

³<https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/the-conversation/2025-09-03/school-bus-offerings-have-improved-since-last-year-but-challenges-remain>

⁴<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/news/2024/fare-free-transit-programs-boost-youth-ridership-public-transportation-statewide> and estimates provided by Hawai'i Department of Transportation.

Investing in a Sustainable Hawai'i

Importantly, this program represents the direct implementation of a recommendation from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation's Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan,⁵ as informed by the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council and other stakeholders. It also complements the state's investment in Safe Routes to School⁶ by addressing the full suite of transportation choices. Estimates from the Hawai'i Department of Transportation suggest the program could result in parents driving 12 million fewer vehicle miles in Hawai'i in the first year alone, equaling the same as removing more than 1,100 cars from our roads.⁷

By removing fare barriers, this bill eases financial strain on families and reduces emissions while improving transit access and independence for Hawai'i's youth.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Micah Munekata
Vice President of Government Affairs

⁵<https://hidot.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/FINAL-ESWRP-2025-10-15.pdf>

⁶https://hidot.hawaii.gov/highways/files/2026/01/SRTSAC_Annual_Report_2026_accessible-v2.pdf

⁷Hawai'i Department of Transportation and the EPA Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator#results>



To: The Senate Committee on Transportation (TRS)
and
The Senate Committee on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs (EIG)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Thursday, February 5, 2026, 3pm

In strong support of SB2699

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and members of the TRS and EIG committees,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports SB2699** that would establish within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties. This measure establishes a fare-free youth transit program special fund, requires biannual evaluations of the new program and special fund, and allocates moneys from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax to the fare-free youth transit program special fund.

In 2024, the Hawaii 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 Hawaii’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 represents a common-sense solution that directly addresses this mandate.

SB2699, also known as the Keiki Ride Free bill, would make transit more equitable and accessible by providing free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawaii. To increase safety and accessibility, the program would also offer free transit fares for one adult accompanying a child age 12 and under.

Transportation costs are a significant burden for families—especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Offering a fare-free youth transit program would not only significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide, it would also reduce household transportation costs, easing financial strain on families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would support families while making transit easier, safer, and more predictable for keiki. In addition, this program would greatly improve youth independence and their access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare and more.

This Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies. Importantly, SB2699 allows our keiki to be part of the solution.

To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like SB2699. We urge you to PASS this important legislation and let keiki ride free.

Last, we wish to share the words of a young climate activist who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, Greta Thunberg.

“Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope, but I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.”

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sherry Pollack

Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org



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: Senate Committees on Transportation and on Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs
Re: **SB2699 – Relating to Public Transit**
Hawaii State Capitol & Via Videoconference
February 5, 2026; 3:00 PM

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and members of the committees,

On behalf of Hawai'i Children's Action Network (HCAN) Speaks!, I am writing in **SUPPORT of SB2699**, which would establish within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties, as well as establish a fare-free youth transit program special fund to which moneys would be allocated from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax.

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 across our counties.

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

Thank you,

Nicole Woo
Director of Research and Economic Policy



ADDRESS
3442 Wai'ālae Ave., Suite 1
Honolulu, HI 96816

PHONE
808-735-5756

EMAIL
bicycle@hbl.org

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Thursday - Feb 5, 2026 - 3:00pm

Hawai'i Bicycling League Strongly Supports SB 2699, relating to Public Transit

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 2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill. It would provide essential financial relief for families, especially low-income families who depend on public transportation; support a reduction in the State's dependence on fossil fuel, imported oil, and other imported energy resources; improve youth access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities and health and community services and; reduce the number of motor vehicles on the roads, and corresponding reductions in traffic, improved road safety, and a better quality of life for everyone.

Biking, walking, rolling, and using public transit are threads of a public safety net that protects everyone. By establishing a fare-free youth transit program in coordination with the counties, the state is creating practical solutions for youth and families to adopt multimodal transportation routines, and develop life-long skills for better physical and mental health. Even more, this program has potential to ease pressure on school bus operations, support youth independence, and advance the state's climate commitments under the Navahine Settlement by reducing emissions and traffic congestion.

We urge you to support this bill and help leverage the economic, health, and environmental benefits it presents so that individuals and families can not only survive, but truly thrive.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

S/Eduardo Hernandez

Eduardo Hernandez
Advocacy Director
Hawai'i Bicycling League



Testimony in Support of SB2699

Hearing on February 5, 2026 at 3:01pm | Senate Committee on Transportation

Aloha Chair Inouye, Vice Chair Elefante, and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee,

My name is Doorae Shin, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Our Children's Trust in strong support of SB2699, which establishes free transit for youth in Hawai'i.

SB2699 addresses a critical and growing challenge facing youth and families across our state: the high and rising cost of transportation. Transportation is one of the largest household expenses in Hawai'i, and for many families, transit fares create a real barrier to accessing school, jobs, healthcare, extracurricular activities, and community resources. By making public transit free for youth, this bill provides immediate and meaningful relief to families while expanding mobility, independence, and opportunity for keiki across Hawai'i.

Free youth transit also promotes equity and access. Youth from lower-income households, rural communities, and families without reliable access to a private vehicle are disproportionately impacted by transportation costs. This bill helps ensure that a young person's ability to participate fully in education and community life is not determined by their family's income or zip code. By strengthening and simplifying existing county youth transit programs, SB2699 creates a more consistent and accessible system statewide.

In addition to affordability and equity benefits, SB2699 advances Hawai'i's climate and public health goals. Encouraging youth to use public transit from an early age reduces reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, lowers transportation-related emissions, and supports long-term mode shift toward cleaner, more sustainable transportation. Increased transit ridership also improves air quality, which is especially important for protecting the health of keiki and other vulnerable populations.

SB2699 is directly aligned with Hawai'i's legal and policy obligations to reduce transportation emissions. In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires HDOT to "take any actions necessary" to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means 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. In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. Expanding access to public transit, especially for youth, is a practical and necessary step toward meeting these obligations. This bill is a concrete and necessary step toward fulfilling these obligations.

SB2699 strengthens and simplifies existing County youth transit programs, reduces household

transportation costs, and advances the state's climate, energy security, and public health goals. By expanding access to public transit to those who need it most, this bill ensures that the benefits of clean and public transportation are shared broadly and fairly across Hawai'i.

For these reasons, Our Children's Trust strongly urges your support for SB2699. Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony and for your leadership on this critical issue.

Mahalo,



Doorae Shin
Our Children's Trust
Honolulu, Hawai'i

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 7:35:50 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Tanya Aynessazian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2699, which would create a Keiki Ride Free program to provide free public transit for youth. Providing reliable public transportation helps create independence and interdependence on community assets for our youth. Accessible transportation is essential to the well-being of our families and communities. Free public transit increases access to education, employment, and community.

Thank you.

Tanya Aynessazian

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:04:48 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Cyd L. Hoffeld	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

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

My name is Cyd Hoffeld, and I am writing to express my **strong support for SB2699**.

This measure provides a vital transportation option for keiki and ‘ohana to access schools, jobs, sports, health services, and essential community activities. On Hawai‘i Island, the high cost of owning and maintaining a dependable vehicle is simply out of reach for many families in our rural areas. **SB2699** bridges this gap, ensuring that zip codes do not determine a family's ability to thrive.

I urged you to please pass **SB2699** to support our community’s mobility and well-being. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Mahalo!

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 8:54:22 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Bob Grossmann, PhD	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If the state can afford this measure, youth would be better able to attend more afterschool activities.

Especially for middle-schoolers, public health issues, overall, can be lessened, thereby reducing governmental costs to treat mental health and substance abuse.

The lack of transport has been a limiting factor for afterschool art classes offered by the non-profit, Afterschool Art.

If needed, bus passes were given to students for the duration of the program and 100% participation could be achieved.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/2/2026 11:02:35 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noel Shaw	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Strong keiki, strong Hawai'i!

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:05:42 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
An Vo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is An and I'm a college public health student in O'ahu. I strongly support SB2699.

Free transportation increases access to opportunities for our youth. I come from a low-income family, so I was eligible for a free holoholo card from my high school. The card was free for me, but it was not free to the school, and I'm grateful I had that opportunity to use the bus for free to get from home to school.

I remember when I was a kid, my mother took me on the bus and she did not have money to pay for both of us to go home. The bus driver did not allow my mother and me to stay on the bus because they wanted money, and I felt like I was extra baggage for my mom. I was probably a dollar more since I was a youth, but coming from a low-income family means I have stories like this to tell, where my mom struggled to pay a few extra dollars so that she and I could go home.

Now that I'm in college, I pay for my holoholo and college doesn't provide free school lunch or free holo cards because I'm no longer a student in O'ahu's public education system. Needing to pay for transportation and food while still having a low-income family status makes me wish I took more opportunities to use the free holo card in high school. My holo card expires during the summer, though, so I have to pay \$3 as an adult per bus ride, and this was a nightmare when I had a couple events in a day that I needed to bus to, adding \$3 (to go to work) after another \$3 (to go to a public health event) then a final \$3 (to go home).

Moreover, I presented about transportation and learned how cars take up more space on the roads, fitting only 1-2 people each car, while busses carry multiple people and use the same amount of gas. There can be 5 cars on the road using 1 gallon of gas each (5 gallons total), while 1 bus takes up less space, carries more passengers, and takes up 1 gallon of gas because it's one vehicle. Plus, car crashes occur daily due to poor drivers, but I've never heard of a bus crash which is more rare, and that's because bus drivers are trained due to their employment as bus drivers.

I urge you to support SB2699 because it will enhance access to opportunities for youth and lead to reduced greenhouse emissions and contribute to a world that we try to make it as green as possible.

Mahalo,
An

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 3:34:33 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
C Tseng	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I really support this bill to give Keiki a free ride on buses. Anything that helps alleviate the traffic, helps our environment, introduces kids to taking the bus, helps families save money when sending kids to school, etc I would consider a good use of tax money. Plus, I would take the bus more often as an adult once in a while instead of driving if was less expensive just to help out our environment and bus system. Mahalo for your support.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:47:18 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
John A. H. Tomoso	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

RE: **2699**

Aloha kākou,

Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical factor in youth access to education, employment, and community activities across Hawai‘i, yet transportation costs and limited school bus capacity continue to create barriers for many families. These challenges disproportionately affect low- and moderate-income households and rural communities, contributing to student absenteeism and lost instructional time. Therefore, I am in strong support of this Bill.

Mahalo a nui,

John A. H. Tomoso+, MSW, ACSW

john.a.h.tomoso@gmail.com, 51 Ku'ula St., Kahului, HI 96732-2906

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:19:48 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Mesina DiGrazia-Roberts	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Mesina. I am writing in strong support of SB2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i.

I am writing as a plaintiff in Navahine v. Hawai’ Department of Transportation; a case which after settling out of court, agreed 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.

Through Navahine v. HDOT, I have sat at the table with government officials. I have seen their signatures at the bottom of documents promising to decarbonize transportation by 2045, and I know that we have the full support of the court over the next 20 years to see our settlement though. This bill is a step toward the future that myself, my fellows, and the Department of Transportation have promised the people of Hawaii.

Many young children I know have found themselves at the beach ready to go home. Without jobs themselves to pay for bus fare, their only option is to call a relative to pick them up in a car. The Keiki Ride Free bill could grant them a way to get home on the bus, succeeding in making

their parents' lives easier, decreasing the burden of transportation costs on low income families, and preventing the extra emissions that would have otherwise been used.

I am hoping you will continue to support all efforts aligned with the Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, HDOT released, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. This directly includes the Keiki Ride Free bill as one of these crucial solutions.

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:51:37 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
cheryl burghardt	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair and committee members

I am in **STRONG** support of SB 2699 which establishes within the Department of Transportation a fare-free youth transit program, to be coordinated with the counties.

As a community member and retired educator who often uses transit, I believe it is essential to ensure that our keiki have reliable, safe ways to get to school, daycare and home. Enactment of SB 2699 will help to do this.

Again, I am in **STRONG** support of SB 2699.

Cheryl Burghardt

Nuuanu Oahu

Testimony in Support of SB2699 | Keiki Ride Free

[Joint Hearing with the Senate Committees on Transportation and Energy and Intergovernmental Affairs](#)

Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 3:00 pm in Room 229 & video conference

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Kawahine'ilikea Naehu, and I am from Mana'e, Moloka'i, and currently a sophomore at Moloka'i High School. I am writing in strong support of SB2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0-18 across Hawai'i.

Growing up on Moloka'i, public transportation looked very different from what it does on other islands. We do not have a public transportation system that can take some students all the way home after school or sports practices, and I am one of those students. As a student athlete at Moloka'i High School, I often stay at school late for practices and games, and there is no option for me to get home other than relying on my parents. In just one sports season alone, my parents have spent well over 100 hours and 1,000 dollars and had to make dozens of 60-mile round-trips between our home and school. That adds up quickly, not just gas cost, but also in time, stress, and missed work or responsibilities. For families like mine, transportation is not a convenience issue; it is a constant financial and logistical burden. Policies like Keiki Ride Free recognize how essential accessible and affordable transportation is for youth and would help ensure that keiki across Hawai'i can get to school, activities, and opportunities without placing additional strain on their families.

In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai'i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires the HDOT to "take any actions necessary" to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means of protecting children's constitutional rights to a life-sustaining climate system and of preserving Hawai'i's public trust resources for present and future generations.

In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. This bill is one of those vital solutions.

Transportation costs also place a significant financial burden on Hawai'i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Keiki Ride Free would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties. It would also significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more.

This bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. And since transportation is Hawai'i's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles/rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways – especially during emergencies.

Please support this bill to make transit more equitable and accessible.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:11:06 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Shay Chan Hodges	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha:

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

Mahalo, Shay Chan Hodges

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 9:21:49 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Emma Waters	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Writing in strong support of this bill. Accessible public transit for our Keiki is a no brainer. It helps to reduce cars on the road and helps lead to a lifelong use of public transit. Mahalo.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 10:14:19 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Ball	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the members of the committee,

I am writing in string support of the Keiki Ride Free measure as a powerful engine of equity, education, and sustainability statewide. As an educator, I have seen firsthand how access to transportation can be a crucial barrier to education and opportunity for Hawaii's keiki.

Encouraging public transport also teaches our youth to make sustainable choices for our state and planet, helping us achieve our ambitious statewide goals of carbon neutrality. Please give you full support to our children and this important measure.

Sincerely yours,

David Ball

Waialae-Kahala

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:13:43 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ignacio	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support SB2699, which establishes a coordinated, fare-free youth transit program within the Department of Transportation, supported by a dedicated special fund and regular program evaluation.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable transportation is a critical factor in youth access to education, employment, and community activities across Hawai‘i. However, transportation costs and limited school bus capacity continue to create real and persistent barriers for many families. These challenges fall most heavily on low- and moderate-income households and on rural communities, where transportation options are fewer and distances are greater. The result is increased student absenteeism, lost instructional time, and reduced access to after-school, employment, and enrichment opportunities.

Fare-free public transit for youth is a practical and proven solution. By removing cost as a barrier, SB2699 would increase transit use among students, provide families with greater flexibility, and reduce pressure on already strained school bus systems. It would also support youth independence and help establish lifelong transit habits, which is an investment that pays dividends well beyond childhood.

Importantly, this measure aligns with Hawai‘i’s broader climate and sustainability goals. Encouraging youth to use public transit directly supports the State’s commitments under the Navahine Settlement by reducing vehicle miles traveled, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, and easing traffic congestion. SB2699 recognizes that climate action and social equity are deeply connected and that meaningful progress requires making sustainable choices accessible to everyone.

The bill’s structure is also sound. Coordinating the program with counties, creating a dedicated special fund, and requiring biannual evaluations and legislative reporting ensures accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Allocating resources from the environmental response, energy, and food security tax appropriately reflects the co-benefits this program delivers across climate, public health, and household stability.

SB2699 is an investment in our keiki, our families, and our future. It strengthens access to opportunity, supports working households, and advances Hawai‘i’s environmental goals in a tangible and immediately impactful way.

For these reasons, I urge your strong support of SB2699.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Ignacio Filippini

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:24:21 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha, I am writing in support of SB2699. I believe the fare-free transit program for our keiki is a good idea. Mahalo for your consideration.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 12:24:27 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Caroline Azelski	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

In support of. Thank you.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:13:17 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Damien Waikoloa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs, Vice Chairs and members of the committees,

I am testifying in strong support of SB2699.

SB 2699 is not just giving away something for 'free', it's an important investment in the healthy development of Hawai'i's keiki. Helping kids become comfortable using public transit builds independence, confidence, and real world skills that serve them throughout their lives. Riding TheBus or Skyline teaches young people how to plan ahead, manage time, navigate their communities, and move safely through public spaces. For older students, transit access can be a first step toward independence, allowing them to get to school, jobs, and activities without relying on parents for every trip. These experiences support personal responsibility and self confidence, especially for youth who may not otherwise have reliable transportation options.

Just as important, early exposure to public transit helps shape lifelong attitudes about how we move through our communities. When keiki grow up viewing buses and rail as normal, reliable, and accessible, they are more likely to carry those habits into adulthood. This fosters a culture that values shared transportation, reduces long term dependence on cars, and supports Hawai'i's climate and sustainability goals. By making transit free and easy for youth today, SB 2699 helps raise a generation that is more independent, more connected, and more committed to a cleaner and more resilient future for our state.

Please support this bill.

Mahalo,

Damien Waikoloa

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 1:58:14 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nicole Shintani	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

To the Legislature regarding bill SB2699 related to public transit to establish a free fare program for youth, I am in full support. Our infrastructure as it is right now makes it so keiki struggle already enough to get around the island on their own. A free fare would reduce the financial burden on families with children, encourage more bus usage, and foster independence in youths of middle and high school age during the time before they are able to drive. It can also help reduce time and traffic burdens by reducing car trips on the road for children attending school and extracurriculars. I can see nothing but positive outcomes for our communities. Please pass this bill.

Nicole Shintani

Testimony in Support of SB2699 | Keiki Ride Free

Thursday February 5, 2026 at 3:00pm

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

My name is Vivienne Hill, I live in Aiea, and am a college student at UH Mānoa. I am writing in strong support of SB2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill, which would provide free transit fares for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i.

When I was a keiki, the bus was very important in helping me establish independence. Public transit made it possible for me to get to school and back without being dependent on my parent’s work schedule. This freedom allowed me to pursue extracurriculars and afterschool activities that I would’ve been otherwise unable to participate in. For many kids and their families, especially those that have to balance work, caregiving, and rising costs, affordable public transit would be an immense help.

In 2022, thirteen youth plaintiffs filed *Navahine v. Hawai‘i Department of Transportation (HDOT)*, resulting in a settlement that requires the HDOT to “take any actions necessary” to achieve zero emissions from ground, marine, and inter-island aviation by no later than 2045. The settlement was agreed to as a means 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.

In 2025, HDOT released its Energy Security and Waste Reduction Plan, which identifies the critical near-, mid-, and long-term policies needed to comply with the settlement agreement. This bill is one of those critical solutions.

Transportation costs also place a significant financial burden on Hawai‘i families, especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Keiki Ride Free would reduce these costs while creating a simple, universal system that replaces fragmented and inconsistent youth fare programs across counties. It would also significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide and improve access to schools, jobs, extracurricular activities, healthcare, and more.

This bill will facilitate critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. And since transportation is Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, shifting trips from private vehicles / rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, improves air quality, and supports safer roadways—especially during emergencies.

Please support this important bill to make transit more equitable and accessible.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:20:37 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
William Caron	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Inouye and Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante and Chang, and Members of the Committees,

As a resident of Kahalu‘u, I write to express my wholehearted support for SB2699, the Keiki Ride Free bill.

This legislation represents a promise kept. The Navahine lawsuit settlement affirmed our keiki’s right to a healthy climate. Free youth fares are a critical step toward reaching zero emissions by 2045. This bill turns the HDOT Energy Security Plan into action.

It also recognizes the daily struggles of Hawai‘i’s families. By eliminating transit fares for youth, we ease household budgets and ensure every child, regardless of background, can reliably get to where they need to be—building a more equitable and connected community.

Ultimately, getting more people onto public transit is the single most effective way to cut the pollution from our largest emissions sector. The results—less traffic, cleaner air, and more resilient infrastructure—benefit every single one of us.

I encourage you to vote yes on this vital measure. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 2:45:06 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jotis Russell-Christian	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai'i's youth and families. I strongly support free public transit for youth which would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. I respectfully urge you to pass this bill for our youth, their families, and the environment we enjoy here in Hawai'i.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 3:07:53 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Scott Dukart	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I support this bill because:

- Keiki need transit because most don't have the option to drive.
- There is uneven access to existing fare free programs and leaves too many keiki out.
- Fare-free transit gives youth independence and access to important educational, economic and social opportunities.

Mahalo!

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 3:38:49 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Benjamin Narwold	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

--Transportation costs are a significant burden for families—especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Offering a fare-free youth transit program would not only significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide, it would also reduce household transportation costs, easing financial strain on families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would support families while making transit easier, safer, and more predictable for keiki.

--The Keiki Ride Free Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, and improves air quality. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like SB2699.

Mahalo!

Benjamin Narwold, Kapaa, Hawaii

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 4:31:27 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Karin Hoida	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

My daughters ride the bus for free by showing their student ID and a few of their friends do as well. It gives them some independence and fosters responsibility and community awareness. I didn't realize this wasn't already a state-wide program. Please support this bill!

--Transportation costs are a significant burden for families—especially low-income households that rely on public transit. Offering a fare-free youth transit program would not only significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide, it would also reduce household transportation costs, easing financial strain on families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would support families while making transit easier, safer, and more predictable for keiki.

--The Keiki Ride Free Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, and improves air quality. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like SB2699.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 5:04:33 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Christopher Dean	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

If you have children, then you know how much money it takes to raise them. It's one thing to get a good salary and raise a family, but for many citizens, it's an overwhelming struggle. This is one place where I would love to see my tax dollars go, helping families to do the best job they can raising a family.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:07:52 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Georgia L Hoopes	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Committee Members,

Transportation costs are a significant burden for families, especially low income households that rely on public transit. Offering a fare-free youth transit program would not only significantly increase youth transit ridership statewide, it would also reduce households transportation costs, easing financial strain on families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would support families while making transit easier, safer, and more predictable for keiki.

The Keiki Ride Free Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, and improves air quality. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like SB2699.

I strongly support this bill.

Mahalo!

Georgia Hoopes, Kalaheo

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 6:42:39 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jackie Keefe	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Inouye & Wakai, Vice Chairs Elefante & Chang, and Members of the Committees,

I strongly support SB2699.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawaii's youth and families. Free public transit for youth would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come.

Please pass SB2699.

Mahalo,

Jackie Keefe, Lahaina

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:27:12 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nanea Lo	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Hello Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Nanea Lo, and I am submitting testimony in **strong support of SB2699**, which establishes the *Keiki Ride Free* program to provide free statewide public transit for all youth ages 0–18 across Hawai‘i’s county bus and rail systems.

I am a **Board Member of the Hawai‘i Workers Center**, a **member of the Honolulu Tenants Union**, **350 Hawai‘i**, **Carbon Cashback Hawai‘i**, and the **Hawai‘i Tax Fairness Coalition**. Through my involvement with these organizations, I consistently hear from working families, renters, and community members about the rising cost of living and the daily tradeoffs they are forced to make just to get by. Transportation costs are a significant and often overlooked burden—especially for low-income households that rely on public transit to access school, work, childcare, healthcare, and community resources.

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawai‘i’s keiki and families. By removing fare barriers, the Keiki Ride Free program would ease financial strain on households while making transit safer, more predictable, and more accessible for youth statewide. This policy would directly support working families by reducing out-of-pocket transportation costs and expanding access to opportunity for keiki and teens.

From a climate and public health perspective, SB2699 is also a clear **triple win**. Transportation remains Hawai‘i’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. As a climate advocate, I strongly support policies that shift trips away from private vehicles and toward public transit. Encouraging youth ridership helps reduce traffic congestion, lower emissions, and improve air quality, while fostering lifelong transit use that benefits future generations.

SB2699 reflects the kind of bold, intersectional policy Hawai‘i needs—one that advances economic justice, supports families, improves public health, and protects our climate.

me ke aloha ‘āina,

Nanea Lo, 96826

Hawai‘i Workers Center Board Member

Honolulu Tenants Union Member

350 Hawai'i Member

Carbon Cashback Hawai'i Member

Hawai'i Tax Fairness Coalition Member

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 7:35:58 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Moss Kuon	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Keiki Ride Free is extremely important to improve affordability for working families. As an individual and member of the Hawai'i Youth Transportation Council, I wholeheartedly support this measure.

This measure will help youth access extra-curriculars, jobs, social events, and help them gain more independence. It only uses 38 cents of the barrel tax, a very, very small amount that will be extremely impactful.

This also takes the burden off of the counties to provide fare-free transit, allowing them to invest that money back into their transportation systems, making transit better.

There are other measures similar to this, but many of them do not go far enough. We need universal free keiki transit. If we have a more uniform, coordinated effort, it will be easier to manage in the long term.

I appreciate you considering my testimony.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/3/2026 8:00:47 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Roger Hamada	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support SB2699.

In addition to all the reasons such a program makes sense stated in the proposed Bill, I believe having fare-free public transport dor keiki and youth will help them familiarize themselves with using the system and increase the probability of their continuing to use the system when they are adults.

Thank you for receiving my comments.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 9:05:22 AM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Julia Marrack	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

Accessible, affordable, and reliable public transportation is essential to the well-being of Hawaii's youth and families. Free public transit for youth would increase access to education, employment, and community opportunities. This would also help reduce carbon emissions, creating a better climate for us all. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come.

The Keiki Ride Free Program is clearly a triple win, that would yield critical climate, traffic, and public health benefits. Transportation is Hawaii's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, lowers emissions, and improves air quality. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations to come. To protect our climate and future, we need ambitious efforts like SB2699.

Mahalo,

Julia Marrack

Kamuela, 96743

February 4, 2026

Trevor Nagamine
PO Box 37966
Honolulu, HI 96837
tnagamine.nb25@gmail.com

Sen. Lorraine Inouye, Chair
Committee on Transportation
Hawaii Senate
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 210
Honolulu, HI 96813

Sen. Glenn Wakai
Committee on Energy and
Intergovernmental Affairs
Hawaii Senate
415 S. Beretania St. Rm. 407
Honolulu, HI 96813

RE: SB2699 — RELATING TO PUBLIC TRANSIT

Dear Chair Inouye, Chair Wakai, and Members of the Committees,

My name is Trevor Nagamine, and I am a resident of Mililani. I am also a member of Neighborhood Board No. 25 (Mililani/Waipio/Melemanu); however, I am submitting this testimony as an individual, and this testimony does not reflect an official position of Neighborhood Board No. 25. I am writing today to support SB2699.

SB2699 would establish a program to allow all children and high school students fare-free access to the various county public transit systems in Hawai'i. This would make it much easier for young individuals to get around, especially when they may not have other means available, and promote the use of public transit. As someone who presently rides TheBus and Skyline from time to time, learning how to ride TheBus when I was in middle school was an invaluable experience that has continued to be useful throughout my life.

I respectfully ask that the committees pass SB2699. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Mahalo,

Trevor Nagamine

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:11:14 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Katherine Fryer	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I strongly support the Keiki Ride Free Program, which would reduce transportation costs while also helping to protect our air quality and environment.

Transportation is Hawaii’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Shifting trips from private vehicles or rideshare services to public transit reduces traffic, emissions, and local air pollution. Free transit for youth can create lifelong ridership, extending the benefits for generations.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 12:32:19 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
arleen velasco	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Please pass this law. Our children need all the help they get in this capitalistic society.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:25:08 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Kristin Mills	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I am in strong support of SB2699. All keiki should be able to ride public transportation free of charge.

Thank you, Kristin Mills

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 1:53:19 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Zane Dalgamouni	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha e ka Luna Ho‘omaluku, ka Hope Luna Ho‘omaluku, a me nā lālā o ke komite.

My name is Zane Dalgamouni. I’m a freshman in high school, and I live in Mānoa. I’m testifying in support of Senate Bill 2699.

I believe that providing fare-free public transit for all youth would have significant, long-term benefits for our state. When young people are able to use public transportation easily and affordably, they’re much more likely to use it regularly. That builds independence at a young age, and those habits tend to stick with people as they grow older.

Over time, that means fewer cars on the road, lower traffic, and reduced emissions. It also makes it easier for students to get to school, jobs, sports, and other activities without always relying on their parents to ferry them around.

Another important benefit of making youth transit fare-free for everyone is that it broadens who uses public transportation. When transit is used by families across all income levels, it tends to receive more public attention and advocacy for reliability, safety, and service quality. That ultimately improves the system for all riders.

This programme is also very cost-efficient. It’s funded through taxes that are already in place on gasoline, and the impact works out to less than one cent per gallon. For families, the benefit is meaningful, while the cost to drivers is minimal.

In the long term, increased transit use can improve public health by reducing air pollution, lowering infrastructure costs, and helping Hawai‘i meet its climate goals.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your support of Senate Bill 2699. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 2:52:59 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Grayson Phelan	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Good afternoon, my name is Grayson Phelan, and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. I moved from Telluride, Colorado in July, and since then my family has not had access to a personal vehicle. At the same time, my mother has been recovering from a broken leg, making transportation to essential places difficult. As a result, we have relied heavily on public buses and ride-share services, which can quickly become costly and inconvenient.

My experience riding buses throughout my entire life has shown me how important reliable and affordable public transportation is, especially for students. Many families in Hawai'i depend on public transit every day. Some cannot afford ride share services or are unable to drive their children to school, and some students attempt to board buses with limited fares because that is all they can afford. These barriers directly affect access to education.

While public transportation costs hundreds of millions of dollars annually, this proposal would cost approximately \$9.87 million per year. I understand that budgeting is complex, but investing in transportation that supports students and families is essential. Access to education is a fundamental right, and transportation is a necessary part of that access. I respectfully urge you to give this bill your serious consideration.

SB-2699

Submitted on: 2/4/2026 6:04:33 PM

Testimony for TRS on 2/5/2026 3:00:00 PM



Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Pono Kaakua	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha. My name is Pono Kaakua. I'm 15 years old and I've been riding the bus since I was 11 to get to football practice, school and the beach when my parents weren't available to drive me. Knowing I can take the bus means I know I can get myself wherever I need to be. What had stopped me from riding the bus is that I don't always have \$1.50 in exact change, and it is hard to fill my HOLO card because at 7-11 it can only be filled with cash. Often I scrounge through the house looking for quarters and have missed the bus as a result.

With free youth transit statewide, these challenges will stop and many more kids will get in the habit of taking the bus, and being empowered to get out of the house and to school, jobs, sports practice and into their communities. I am lucky to have parents, grandparents and friends that can often drive me where I need to be so I only have to rely on the bus sometimes. But, there are many keiki who do not have people who can drive them because their families don't have cars, their parents work multiple jobs, or gas is too expensive. These keiki rely on the bus and their lives could really benefit from free bus rides for keiki.

Mahalo for allowing me to testify in strong support of the Keiki Ride Free bill and mahalo for caring about Hawai'i's keiki.