

## **Hawaii School Bus Association**

47-114 Waihua Road  
Kaneohe, HI 96744  
Work: (808)239-6755  
Fax: (808)239-9221

January 28, 2008

LATE TESTIMONY

Representative Roy M. Takumi, Chair  
Representative Lyla B. Berg, Vice Chair  
Committee on Education  
Hawaii State Capitol, Room 309  
Honolulu, HI 96813

### **RE: HB176, Relating to School Buses**

Dear Chair Takumi, Vice Chair Berg and Members of the Committee:

I am Leatrice Gomes, representing the ten companies in the Hawaii School Bus Association. We move 40,000 students between home and school daily and some or all of us have been active in the business since the first private school buses began to transport Hawaii's school kids, many decades ago. This is a highly regulated business, that is heavily dependent on very expensive, highly specialized equipment, that must be regularly and properly maintained and amortized over a significant number of years.

In all the years that school buses have been used in Hawaii, with tens of thousands of children being transported millions of miles, over decades of time, not a single child has ever been killed in a bus accident. In fact bus accidents are very rare.

The intent of SB3262, Relating to School Buses is to mandate the use of seat belts on every seat on every school bus in Hawaii. But the bills purport to solve a problem that does not exist. And if enacted into law, seat belts themselves may very well be a potential focal point of injury or death, where none exists now.

This bill would mandate that Hawaii's school buses would all have to be taken apart, retrofitted, and put back together. We have no idea of the cost of that. But we can tell you that putting seatbelts on standard school buses is a change in well designed vehicles which may well cause more harm than help.

HB176 Testimony  
February 2, 2009  
Page 2

And regarding that, school buses are already the safest mode of transportation in Hawaii and in the United States. They are much safer than are automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, bicycles, or even walking. Walking to school, or riding one's bike, are far more dangerous than taking a school bus.

It is absolutely verifiable that every day in the United State, 23.5 million students ride 450,000 school buses without safety belts, and travel 4.3 billion miles. That is billion. And statistically, out of 23.5 million student bus riders riding 4.3 billion miles per year, there are between 10 and 20 deaths per year in America that are school bus related. Of those, only about 5 involve school bus passengers. Five. The remainders are pedestrian accidents. Nationally, the number of school bus related fatalities is so low as to be nearly non-existent.

Furthermore, in the entire history of the motor vehicle in Hawaii, there has never been a single school bus passenger fatality, due to a vehicular accident.

SB3262 is well intended, and we ought to all applaud the authors for bringing the issue to the front, but thankfully, school buses are already well designed and are not a part of a safety problem that demands a solution.

We strongly oppose HB176 and urge that the bill be killed.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Leatrice Gomes  
President