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Testimony of
MARK B. GLICK, Chief Energy Officer

before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:30 AM
State Capitol, Conference Room 325 and Videoconference

Providing Comments on
HOUSE BILL NO. 2451 HD1

RELATING TO TRANSPORTATION.

Chair Lowen, Vice Chair Perruso, and members of the Committee, the Hawai'i State Energy Office (HSEO) offers the following comments on House Bill No. 2451 HD1, which requires counties to implement fare-free public transit for all riders, establishes the Fare-Free Public Transportation Tax and Dividend Special Fund, and increases the environmental response, energy, and food security tax on petroleum products to support fare-free transit statewide.

HSEO appreciates the Legislature's continued focus on improving access to affordable, equitable transportation options for Hawai'i's residents. 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. Meeting these targets will require a portfolio of strategies, including reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improved system efficiency, and expanded access to low- and zero-emission mobility options. Increasing public transit use can contribute meaningfully to these outcomes.

HSEO's 2023 Pathways to Decarbonization Report to the Legislature¹ emphasizes that reducing reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel 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 the general public 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.

Finally, HSEO recognizes that fare-free access to public 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, particularly for low-income residents. To the extent that fare-free transit results in increased transit use, it contributes to reduced traffic congestion and supports more efficient use of roadway infrastructure.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

¹ <https://energy.hawaii.gov/what-we-do/clean-energy-vision/decarbonization-strategy/>