



March 3, 2020

Honorable Cedric Gates
State House District 44
Room 331 Hawaii State Capitol
415 S Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Representative Gates:

We write in support of H.B. 1235, which would direct the Department of Education to require public schools to hold an annual pedestrian-safety course for students from kindergarten through grade twelve. Our mission is to prevent unintentional injuries among kids 19 and under, as they are the number one killer of children in the United States.

For 20 years, Safe Kids Worldwide has worked to improve pedestrian safety for children around the world through the "Walk This Way" program, successfully reaching nearly 20 million children in 11 countries globally, including the US. The program is highlighted by International Walk to School Day and the Safe School Zone projects. With education content provider Scholastic, we created "Clifford Takes a Walk," a book in which Clifford the Big Red Dog teaches kids about pedestrian safety. In the U.S., the injury rate for children aged 0-12 has decreased by 59 percent since 2003. We cite the "Walk This Way" program so you know that such an education program for school kids is in place and would make the cost of this legislation far less. We are sending you XX copies of "Clifford Takes a Walk" under separate covers.

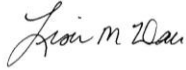
Pedestrian fatalities have become a transportation emergency in the U.S. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 22 percent of children ages 10-14 killed in traffic crashes were pedestrians, making them one of the most vulnerable groups.¹ 18 percent of kids aged 5-9 and 10 percent aged 15-19 were also on foot. "Twalking", or texting and walking², demonstrates the importance of an annual safety course as many of us are glued to our smart devices. A Safe Kids study in 2016 of 39,000 middle and high school students found that 1 in 4 high school and 1 in 6 middle school students were "distracted walking".³ Providing education about pedestrian safety will be important in ensuring that one mistake while crossing the street does not cause a preventable loss of young life.

Here is an example. In August 2019, a ten-year-old boy was seriously injured after being struck by a car that sent him flying 10-15 feet onto the road while crossing the congested Kamehameha Highway to visit Laniakea Beach.⁴ The Laniakea crossing has generated controversy due to the large number of pedestrians crossing the highway to see the turtles. It is unprotected by crosswalks, lights and places to park on the ocean side of the road. It is important to equip students like him with the necessary knowledge to prevent pedestrian fatalities.

Safe Kids is a grass roots network of more than 400 coalitions across the country, including Safe Kids Hawaii led by Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children. We thank you for your leadership in introducing H.B. 1235 and stand ready to support you and your efforts to pass it.

If you have any questions you may contact Lisa Dau, Coordinator, Safe Kids Hawai'i, Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children, 808.983.6800, lisa.dau@kapiolani.org

Sincerely,



Lisa Dau
Safe Kids Hawaii
Coalition Coordinator



Anthony Green
Safe Kids Worldwide
Chief Officer Network & Advocacy

Joshua Oyos, a Safe Kids Intern and student at NYU Abu Dhabi performed research in support of this testimony.

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. *Traffic Safety Facts: Pedestrians*. Available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812493>

² The New York Times. *Texting While Walking Is Dangerous. Here's How to Stop*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/13/technology/personaltech/distracted-walking-twalking.html>

³ Safe Kids Worldwide. *Alarming Danger in School Zones*. Available at https://www.safekids.org/sites/default/files/alarmed_dangers_in_school_zones.pdf

⁴ Star Advertiser. *State renews push for Laniakea barriers after child hit crossing highway*. Available at <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2019/08/03/hawaii-news/10-year-old-laniakea-crash-victim-returns-home-dot-renews-push-to-erect-barriers/>