

St. Marys City Schools



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Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee Sub. Senate Bill 134 Proponent Testimony Oct. 2, 2019

Chairman McColley, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Transportation, Commerce, and Workforce Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to you today in support of Sub. Senate Bill (SB) 134, the School Bus Safety Act. My name is Dan Grothause and I am the Transportation Supervisor with the St. Marys City School district

The St. Marys City School District appreciates Senator Gavarone introducing this legislation that will have a positive impact on student safety in and around school buses.

The number of vehicles passing stopped school buses is alarming. This past March we along with 182 other districts participated in the OSBA bus passing survey which recorded 1,521 violations in a single day. This figure does not indicate how many students were in danger during these violations, but if it was only one student then that cost is too high.

Our drivers in St. Marys and throughout the state take student safety very seriously. They go to great lengths to educate the students on proper safety procedures while entering and exiting the bus. We are monitoring traffic, using high visibility reflective tape on the buses, have upgraded the red warning lights to strobe lights and use white strobe light on top of bus, all in an attempt to bring attention to fact that a school bus is present and stopped to load or unload students.

While doing all of this we are still required to get license plate number and driver description as part of the law enforcement. That is why the use of cameras to capture this information will greatly increase the likelihood of a citation being issued to violators.

Included within this bill is language that clearly states that cameras are permitted to be used as evidence and will appropriate \$500,000 over the biennium to be distributed to school districts for the purchase and installation of cameras. I am very supportive of this language.

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This bill will also double the fine for illegally passing a stopped school bus, enhance the penalties for drivers that hit or kill a student to a felony offense of “vehicular harm”.

While increasing and enhancing the penalties will occur after a violation I am much more supportive of the designation of August as “School Bus Safety Awareness” month.

This allows the state and districts to be more proactive in an attempt to stop the violation before it occurs. The development of public service announcements could help in bringing public awareness to the growing problem of illegally passing a stopped school bus.

Chairman McColley and members of the Senate Transportation Commerce, and Workforce Committee, thank you for your time and attention. I urge your support for Sub. SB 134.

Sincerely,

Dan Grothause
Transportation Supervisor
St. Marys City Schools