Representative Lisa Sobecki
House District 45

House Bill (H.B.) 615 Testimony
May 26, 2020

Good Morning. Chair Green, Vice-Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy, and members of the House Transportation Public Safety Committee; thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 615 with my Joint Sponsor Representative Joe Miller. House Bill 615 permits local school districts to install protective barriers around the bus driver.

Throughout the past few months, I have heard from school administrators from across the state that one of the most important thing for schools reopening in the Fall is pupil transportation. The availability to transport students safely is critical, and schools are committed to doing everything they can to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students. One thing that also needs to be addressed is the protection of the bus driver. Children could have no symptoms for COVID-19 but act as a vehicle for the virus and spread it to other children or adults, including their bus driver. A bus driver is doing their job and their employer should have the ability to do everything in their power to ensure their safety and health.

House Bill 615 gives school districts the ability to install protective barriers around their driver on a school bus. Currently, similar barriers are being utilized in many different aspects of our economy and on buses used for public transportation. Why should it be different for school buses? The bill permits the State Highway Patrol to inspect the barriers as part of their normal inspection process. The bill requires the Department of Public Safety to develop and enact rules regarding the barriers of both a temporary and permanent nature. Furthermore, the bill includes an emergency clause in order for the bill to take immediate effect.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today and I will now pass along the floor to Rep. Miller for his testimony. Afterwards, I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.