Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Proponent Testimony – SB 23
Ohio School Boards Association
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
February 9, 2021

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill (SB) 23, the School Bus Safety Act. My name is Jennifer Hogue, director of legislative services with the Ohio School Boards Association. Joining me in support of the bill are Kevin Miller with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and Katie Johnson with the Ohio Association of School Business Officials.

Our organizations represent public school district boards of education, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs, business managers, and other school business officials from around the state. Our members appreciate Senator Gavarone for her tireless work to enact legislation that will enhance student safety in and around school buses and change the culture surrounding how the public reacts to school buses on our roads.

The number of vehicles illegally passing school buses is a serious concern that worsens each year. In March of 2019, OSBA organized a bus-passing survey for school districts to record and report their incidents for one day. The results from the 183 districts that returned the survey were staggering: Nearly one-third of Ohio's 15,000 school bus drivers completed the survey, and more than 1,500 buses reported being illegally passed. If all drivers experienced this rate of being illegally passed, Ohio could have 4,500 buses illegally passed each day. The following factors were revealed from the survey:

- 45% of the illegal passing occurred in the morning.
- 52% were illegally passed in the afternoon.
- 73% were passed as approaching the bus from the front.
- 27% were passed from the rear.
- 98% were passed on the left.
- 2% were passed on the right.

On a national basis, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services conducts a similar survey each year. In 2019, more than 131,000 bus drivers from 39 states participated and reported more than 95,000 instances of vehicles illegally passing their buses.[1]

SB 23 would allow cameras to be installed on school buses and allow images or recordings from those cameras to be used under a new civil penalty system in which fines would be imposed for illegally passing a school bus. The bill would also create the School Bus Safety and Education Fund, which would receive a portion of each civil penalty issued and use those funds to enhance school bus safety and raise public awareness of the laws governing school bus safety. Finally, the bill would designate August as "School Bus Safety Awareness Month."

---

[1] https://nasdpts.org/resources/Documents/2019%20NASDPTS%20Illegal%20Passing%20Results%20Summary-7-24-19-v2-Updated%201-3-20%20to%20Include%20DC.pdf

Together, these measures will create a foundation to ensure students are safely transported to and from school, inform the general public about school bus laws, and hold motorists or vehicle owners accountable for their offenses. Passage of SB 23 will place Ohio among the 22 other states[2] who allow local governments or school districts to use cameras to capture images and issue tickets for drivers illegally passing stopped school buses.

Chairman Hoagland and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for your time and attention. We urge you to support SB 23 and would be happy to answer any questions at your convenience.

- Jennifer Hogue, director of legislative services, Ohio School Boards Association
jhogue@ohioschoolboards.org

- Kevin Miller, director of governmental relations, Buckeye Association of School Administrators
miller@basa-ohio.org

- Katie Johnson, deputy executive director, Ohio Association of School Business Officials
katie@oasbo-ohio.org

---

[2] https://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/state-school-bus-stop-arm-camera-laws.aspx