



Representative Jon Cross
Ohio's 83rd House District

Chairman McClain, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Grim and Members of the House Transportation Committee; I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today on HB 518, the School Bus Safety Act.

One issue that everyone can agree on is keeping Ohio children safe. School bus related accidents and deaths are an issue that has plagued this state and this country since the beginning of the school bus. It is estimated that school buses are illegally passed between 1.6-3.8 times per day. HB 518 does not put undue strain on students, schools, bus drivers or law enforcement, but instead provides a framework to give law enforcement more tools to enforce existing school bus safety laws. HB 518 has also been widely implemented throughout the country, with 27 states, including Florida, passing similar legislation. The result of this has been a significant decrease in school bus related accidents, with between 94%-98% of motorist who were ticketed not receiving a second ticket. Simply equipping the buses with the cameras works to change driver behavior and reduces accidents and deaths.

It accomplishes this by providing a framework for law enforcement to take advantage of new technology, and curb school bus related accidents and deaths. This technology is stop-arm cameras that capture drivers as they commit school bus related traffic violations and shares that information with local law enforcement. Video evidence of violations is then PERMISSIVE and not mandatory and law enforcement is in no way required to use video evidence. Violations are also subject to an agreement between the local school district and local law enforcement.

To ensure there is no incentive for local law enforcement to issue citations, and to reduce any undue financial strain on school districts, all revenue from camera-based school bus violations will go directly to the local school district.

In 2022, there were 104 school bus related deaths nationwide. While we have heard opponents of this bill say that this is a problem that does not warrant a solution, the victims of these crashes are often students. HB 518 does not put undue strain, financial or otherwise, on students, bus drivers, school districts or law enforcement and authorizes, rather than requires, school districts and law enforcement to take advantage of this technology. It is merely another tool in the tool bag. Given this bill is relatively inexpensive and hardly difficult to implement, to allow even one student to lose their life in a preventable bus crash is something this body can simply not allow.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and ask for your support for HB 518.