

HB 96 WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 04/07/2025

Name: Students At Meadowdale Career Technology Center

Are you representing: Yourself **Organization**

Organization (If Applicable): Dayton Public Schools

Position/Title: Students

Address: 3873 Whitestone Court City: State: Zip: Dayton, OH 45416

Best Contact Telephone: 937-903-5414 Email: kodonnell@daytonpublic.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? **Yes**

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): House Bill 96

Specific Issue: School Transportation Funding

Are you testifying as a: **Interested Party**

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? **Yes**

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? **Each testimony is 1-3 minutes. There are 10 testimonies related to school transportation**

Please provide a brief statement on your position: **The following testimonies advocate for more funding to be allocated to school transportation, so that every student has a safe bus. Currently, many of the students in our school ride mass public transportation, where they experience harassment and regularly witness crime by adults.**

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

We Need Safe School Buses

December 30, 2024

Testimonies by Thurston Melson, Alexis Edwards, Trinity VanLeer, JB3, Jay'Reon Smith, LH2, DA2, Marcus Watkins, A'Mari Totty, and more.

Edited and Compiled by Tbu4

What do we do about the lack of school buses and drivers for kids? We are asking state and local governments to provide school buses for all kids and to put a considerable amount of money into transporting kids to public schools instead putting them on mass public transit like the RTA. In this collection, you'll read testimonies from students who've ridden the RTA and have strong reasons why they think it's unsafe.

We also asked the candidates running for office how they would vote on increasing funding for school transportation. You can find their responses after the student testimonies.

Thurston Melson: We Can't Let Kids be Abused on Public Buses

I want to ask with the most respect, can we take more time to try and address the problem with the safety of our public school transportation?

Many, and I mean many people ride public transportation every day to get to their destination, and not getting these people the safe travels they need can keep them from getting to their destinations. "Ohio has a strong and productive transit network, with 61 public transit agencies that carry over 115 million trips a year" ([ohiostatewidetransit](#)). Dayton

is one of the public school districts where high school students have to ride the mass transit system to school.

Advertisement

Not only are people being physically abused on public transportation, but they're also getting emotionally abused. In my community there's a number of people who use public transportation every day, just to simply get to work or school, and they have to constantly hear the words of someone talking about them. No one should have to go through harassment just because they are in need of a way to their destination.

People are being assaulted on public buses. Metro Magazine says "Depending on the transit setting, from **one quarter to one third of riders** considered sexual harassment to be a significant problem." ([metromagazine](#)). Having to use public transportation doesn't mean you should be assaulted. When is it going to be enough until we finally take the steps into making it safer?

Because of what people go through on these buses, it can make them want to stop using them. That can have a big effect on their lives, because they'll now have to pay for getting to their transportation another way, which can be even more expensive for them. "According to the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) Transit Savings Report, individuals who ride public transit instead of driving can save an average of \$13,000 annually , or \$1,100 a month." ([riderta](#))

While I don't use public transportation myself, I have many friends at my highschool who have to ride the RTA to and from school, and they tell me how uncomfortable it can be to have to ride. And everytime

they do it just lets me know that we really do need to make a change. We must bring light to this in our community, so we can finally bring the safe public transportation our community wants and needs. We cannot let kids be sexually and emotionally abused while on public transportation.

The lack of safety on public transportation is happening because these people who are doing these bad things aren't facing any repercussions, making them continue what they do because they are getting away with it. With the help of the state and local governments we could possibly get the funding to make a more safe environment for public transportation, and make it harder for the people that are doing things to get access to the public transportation, and finally make them have consequences for their actions.

Maybe by having someone who is on public transportation at all times to monitor what's happening, and making it so the people who do get caught doing something harmful can be banned and make a system to notice when someone who was banned tries to ride again.

In Dayton, RTA has created a public awareness campaign for riders whenever they "see something, say something" in order to try and keep people more safe and prevent more things from happening. ([rta safety](#)) While RTA is putting forth effort to try and stop these things from happening, depending on riders to try to stop them, just simply isn't enough, because people don't always speak out against these things. While we could all band together to try and put a stop to this, I don't think it would be enough. We need the government to back us up.

Listen to the victims, the students who have been harassed on public transportation. They're the people who are actually experiencing these

bad things. With the government's help we could finally get the help to make a safer environment.

Advertisement

Our representatives need to show us they actually want to put a stop to these things, and take into consideration the suggestions I gave previously to improve school transportation safety.

As our elected representatives, you can implement policies and give funding to public transportation in order to put a stop to these things happening and make it safer for people who ride.

This is more than a reasonable request because people are falling victim to being assaulted or abused on our public transportation every single day, and it needs to be stopped. If we simply continue to do nothing innocent people will continue to be put in harm's way, just because they have no other way to get to their destination.

If we finally address how unsafe public transportation can be and do something about it then people will finally feel like they can be safe when riding public transportation, and no longer have to worry about if something may happen to them. Will you, the state and local representatives finally do something about this, or will you continue to let people be hurt for no reason at all?

Sincerely, Thurston Melson

Alexis Edwards: Grown Adults are Fighting on the Bus!

I kindly ask the representative to address the problem of school transportation for people. Lately some transportation for students has

been unavailable, affecting some students' ability to access their education. Lack of proper transportation leads to students not being able to get to school on time or even being able to get to school. That can be a stressful experience for students' parents and the student themselves. (<https://stnonline.com>.) An Example from School Transportation News says that "Schools have reported delays, cancellations and logistical obstacles that disrupt the school day and create stress for families." All this due to not having school buses. Research has even shown that the lack of school buses/transportation for students could possibly lead to lower student test scores, increased stress, and behavioral problems. Parents already have the stress of their lives, and the worry that something could happen to their children anytime, with the lack of transportation on top. Parents who work may be stressing on how to get the kids to school and balance work.

I have experienced grown adults fight on the RTA bus. I don't want any students having to see that or go through that; someone could have brought out a weapon or worse and the student could have gotten hurt due to the adults fighting on the bus. Transportation needs to be safer for everyone, and not only have some schools have buses. If every school cant have them, then none should have them. Make it fair. If students are not getting enough proper education, how are they going to make it to the world, in the first place. Children are what makes our future, I don't know much about the other parts of the world if and if they have transportation problems. But I know at this rate we are losing a future worth having for our future generations to come.

The funding for school bus transportation has suffered a big cut from funding, leading to barely having any school buses for school. (<https://slate.com>) The Department of education has a big responsibility for doing something about the transportation issue for

schools. We need to address the fact that not many drivers are getting paid enough to support themselves. On top of that, the cost of getting a school bus is already a lot, sometimes hundreds of thousands of dollars. We need to invest more into transportation if we want our future generations to get to a better start. It would be a waste of school funding if students can not get to school on time. We need The Department of Transportation to increase its work on reducing the cost of getting rides, and giving free rides for buses for some people. (www.transportation.gov). There are not enough people speaking out about the transportation problems. Trying to solve this problem of school transportation takes more than one person; it takes a big effort and needs to be coordinated throughout a large community.

Advertisement

We need our representatives to speak up and call for the Department of Transportation to re-look for a way for all students to have a safe and efficient way to get to school. You have the power to plan and coordinate better ways for transportation, and you can set safety regulations for all models of transportation. This request isn't to just benefit the students but it's to benefit the community, your world, our home. Students should be able to go to a place to learn, without going through a chance of harm coming towards them, or being unable to reach the place. Children shouldn't have to walk through unsafe neighborhoods, or have to go to the downtown hub, with a chance of missing the bus. Anything could happen to students on their way to get to school or home, due to not very safe transportation being provided.

If we get every student a safe bus, parents will be able to work without having to worry about their kid not being able to get to school. Students will be in a little bit less danger, and don't stress about

getting their education. And overall, it will be way more beneficial for people. Can you commit to proposing some type of law that requires more safe transportation for all students?

Sincerely,

Alexis Lynelle Edwards

Trinity Vanleer: Not Enough Money for School Transportation

I respectfully ask the representative to address the problem of our school buses! The background information that people should know to understand the issue is that our buses got taken away so now we have to ride the RTA. The impact this issue is having on people locally is that the space on the RTA is only so little because of the students on the RTA plus the adults taking up a lot of space in the community. The fact that shows how serious this problem is that students have to ride the buses with strangers. If we want to avoid harassment on the RTA, we have to find our own way home.

We haven't had our buses for a while and many students miss the RTA regularly. Some students don't know how to get around. It matters to me personally because I want to have our school buses back for the right transportation, not for mass public transportation. What must be done is to take this matter to someone who's going to take it seriously and get our buses back. We're not the only school district in Ohio struggling with these problems. Not enough money for the buses and drivers is why this problem is happening. The greatest responsibility for doing something about this problem would be with the government. We need funds in the budget to get our buses back. First we need someone to take action to help us with this problem, which our representatives have not done yet. We

need the government to help us solve this problem. Get our buses back. The power that the lawmakers have is to step up and get the students back on track with our school buses. We've gone without our buses for too long now. Can you step up to help us get our school buses back?

Sincerely, TVL

JB3: Bus Shortages are Unfair to Families

I respectfully ask the representative to address the problem of public schools not having bus transportation. Dayton Public School students have to ride RTA buses because DPS doesn't have enough money for yellow buses to bring DPS students to school and back. This is impacting people in our community because parents can't bring their kids to school every single day because they're either busy or have to work. Since yellow buses stopped taking students to school, tardies in schools slowly started going up because now students have to be brought to school later than usual since their parents are busy. Students, and parents all are saying how it doesn't make sense that they stopped using yellow buses for transportation and they need to bring them back.

Advertisement

This problem affects people's daily lives because parents have to work jobs in the morning and won't have enough time to take their kids to school. This is also affecting bank accounts because gas prices are high and the amount of driving it takes to bring their kids back and forth from school and practice all year takes a lot of gas money. I don't think my dad should have to take me to school every single day when we could easily have bus transportation. I also don't like walking to school since it's starting to get colder outside and I live 40+ minutes

away. DPS should have a board meeting about bringing yellow buses back. Across the world students probably don't have parents that can take them to school every day and because of that they have to walk every day or every other day.

Putting students on the RTA buses is leading to public safety complaints and Chronic absenteeism. DPS changed the bus rules so they should have the responsibility to change the buses back to yellow buses. The effort to bring back DPS yellow buses will cost several million dollars. We can't solve this on our own because we don't have the power to change it ourselves. We also need help from Ohio's lawmakers in the General Assembly. The state government makes our school district pay to bus students to private schools and leaves us with not enough money to bus our own high school students.

We need our representatives to speak up and try to help the board to get the buses back. You Have the power to propose new laws and funding to get yellow buses back. This is a reasonable request because students around Dayton are stuck either not being on time to school or not coming to school due to their parents having jobs. If we don't do anything about this problem then students will continue to be late to school or not show up. If we succeed in addressing this problem then students will start showing up to school on time and not being absent most of the days. Can you help our school district start bringing back yellow buses to help students get to school on time more efficiently?

Jay'Reon Smith: Students Are Riding With Drug Addicts

I want the representative to address the issue of transportation for children in school. Dayton Public School kids have no yellow buses and we have to ride the RTA next to [adults doing hard drugs].

This is because half of our transportation money goes to private schools. One issue it's having on us is if you miss the RTA bus it could take a long time for another one to come. That leads to missing school and grades dropping, two issues that need to be addressed. According to Mineta institute 63 % of respondents reported being harassed on a public bus. The seriousness of the problem is that harassment isn't good; we all know that being harassed on the victim's end can do something to mess with their mental state.

This issue affects people's daily lives, even if we don't see it. I feel like if you haven't ever been through it then you'll never really know, but it could do a lot to people and honestly mess with people's mental state. It matters to me because it's very important and could happen to anyone, like my little brother or sister – god forbid – but it's liable to happen to any teenager or child who rides a public bus that any and everyone can get on without a parent's supervision. Even though it's very wrong and nobody should let it happen, it could happen in public right in front of someone's face and someone will just walk right past it like it's a normal thing. They should just send out yellow buses or send out buses where kids can ride with kids and teenagers. It's connected to a lot of other people's struggles around the world that a lot of grown ups go through. That's how sex trafficking starts and it also happens in uber and lyft's. This problem is happening because not enough money is going into DPS buses to get us better transportation. I feel like the school board is not going hard enough to get us better transportation. Whatever the cost, that's a small price to pay for kids' safety.

Advertisement

According to NCSL, legislatures in 24 states have enacted at least 40 school transportation bills. If it's not solved then the same stuff

will keep happening and then this all will be for nothing. We need more people behind this movement to have a bigger voice. One individual can't get everyone's attention, that's why we need more people behind it to put it out there more. I need the representatives to be our voice for the public because they are better at arguing it or just coming across better. We elect our representatives to introduce bills and spending ideas for the budget.

Not only is it reasonable to ask for school transportation; I feel like it's needed because this is a serious situation and a crisis can happen to anybody. If we do nothing, we will continue to see harassment happen. I feel like life would be better if all kids had a safe bus, then people wouldn't have to go through with what they have been going through. All I would ask the representative is to help us.

Anonymous: No Bus Pass? No School

I would like the local representative to address the school bus transportation shortage. The school can't get enough people to drive the buses. In that case the schools should provide transportation for the students. Students have to take the RTA buses to get to school with other passengers. Half of the students I know take the RTA buses because the district can't afford school buses. Some students need a bus pass to ride the RTA compared to school buses where they just need their student ID. It affects people by having stress and anger to even get a bus pass for RTA and sometimes the machine that gives out bus passes might break down. Having students on a RTA bus with other people could result in uncomfortableness when riding along with fear of others. I think that the school board should have a meeting about bus transportation and try to figure out how to bring more people into driving school buses. Some people can't ride the bus because they are short on money and don't have a bus pass.

The problem is happening because a lot of people are choosing not to drive the school buses. Bus drivers have the most responsibility because they have to pick us students up and drop us off after school. The School superintendent has had a meeting with the school board to address the bussing issue. They were not given a lot of options to address the situation. People just choose not to take the job of driving school buses at this level of pay.

We need to bring more people into driving the school buses, which means we need to raise their pay. We need the funds to replace and repair the buses. The legislature has the power to call for meetings and bring it up for vote. I think that it is a reasonable request because we as a state are short on bus drivers and need more drivers to take students to school. The issue would only get worse if we do nothing about it. If we get more drivers, more students would be able to get to school on time and won't have to take the RTA Bus with other people. Can you commit to helping us recruit more People that are qualified to drive the school buses?

DA2: Students Are Being Harassed by Adults on Buses

I respectfully ask the representative to address the issues with the public school transportation here in the city of Dayton. Students have to ride Dayton's public buses, the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), in very unsafe and very packed environments, leading to students being late.

Advertisement

Students are getting harassed by adults when riding the RTA. Key findings include that sexual harassment during transit trips is a common experience (63% of respondents reported having been harassed), the experience of sexual harassment leads students to

limit their use of transit, many take safety precautions when using transit, and very few report experiences of harassment. (<https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/>)

Many students have come out with their experiences while riding the RTA bus to school, and many things that they have said mainly state that it's really not safe. Many students need to ride the bus for hours to get to school and take multiple transfers, a complaint that can be heard from Dayton to New York and beyond ([Alyssa Quart](#)).

RTA buses may come late to the school, making other students come late to school.

Even though I have been on a RTA bus a few times in my life, it's not really safe for students to ride to school on. Public schools need more funding to afford their own buses. Transportation around the world can cause some risk, such as getting harassed.

This problem is happening because the Ohio General Assembly agreed to make Dayton Public Schools provide busing for other schools, and leave other DPS students to find ways to get to school. DPS needs more funding to afford more school buses. My classmates and I have been talking to people in power about this issue, and were urging them to at least take action about it.

Why is the action mentioned above not enough to solve the problem? Some of the people in power that we have talked to either don't care about this issue. We, as citizens, can't fix the problem of lack of busing in DPS. However, we can advocate for busing for public schools. You as a lawmaker have the power to propose laws to the legislative branch.

We need busing for our students, and not going to school on the RTA buses, which are not 100% safe. If we do nothing, attendance will go down, more students will get harrassed on the RTA buses. If we give students their buses back, students will be able to go to school safely and on time. Are you going to help propose a law to let public schools get their own busing and not to have to provide busing to private schools?

Marcus Watkins: Students Shouldn't Have to Pay to Get To School

People don't like riding the RTA to school because of strangers on the bus. People are capable of anything. They act in certain ways that might be unsafe for kids. It's not safe riding with total strangers who you don't know. It's also not right that it costs money for kids to ride the RTA to school. The RTA is not ideal, but if we have to ride it, I believe the RTA should be free for students.

From the outside looking in, it seems that there's a lot of chaos going on with students themselves on the buses, let alone all the chaos that comes from these strangers. It's just unsafe. Even the drivers are random people who we don't know. We're putting our kids lives in random people's hands next to a bunch of adults we don't know. It's just not safe.

Advertisement

Students have been asking the schools to bring back yellow buses for the students. Even if we have to chip in, having to have a bus pass to ride a school bus. They can bring the yellow buses back so we don't need to have a bus pass to be able to get to school. Then we can ride just with our peers, instead of random adults. That's in our best interest.

This law will make the RTA free for kids going to school while we transition back to having yellow buses. We will also invest a tad bit more money into getting yellow buses for the students. Instead of being stuck when we lose our bus passes, we'll be able to show our current student ID to the driver to be able to board the bus. Many of us don't have bus passes, but all students have an ID. We also need the state government to invest several millions of dollars into getting school buses back for all students.

This law will help parents because it takes the pressure off parents who struggle getting their kids to school every day. It will make parents and students feel safer knowing that their child is in good hands getting to and from school. It will also benefit the RTA because they won't have to deal with the chaos of having students on the public buses.

We intend to design a petition to get the word out about how we can all help get students to and from school in a safe and timely manner.

To get the money needed for paying for school buses, we propose an increase in income taxes for the most wealthy 1 percent of people in Ohio. We can also end the law that says that public schools have to pay for private school transportation. That state law takes up half of our transportation funding in Dayton Public Schools, and leaves us riding mass transit because we can't afford yellow buses.

If I had the funds, I would buy more yellow buses for students and hire drivers at an attractive pay rate. We're going to have to keep doing this investment. We can't let this problem affect future students. We also will be able to prevent the chaos and trauma that comes with getting kids to school on time.

Investing \$8 million in school transportation over five years is absolutely worth it because we need kids to get to school safely. To keep our kids learning and getting an education, we need them to be able to get there in the first place.

People's basic rights are being violated in this situation, because we in Ohio have a right to an education. We have a right to get an education with nothing in the way. The problem we're having with school transportation is getting in the way of our education. Everyone deserves the chance to succeed and do their best. Everyone needs a way to ensure they can achieve their goals. We as a society can help people by getting them the tools and resources they need, including a safe ride to school.

By voting yes on this law, you are doing something meaningful about the problem we're having with our transportation, and showing that you agree to help get our students to and from school in a safe and timely manner. We need help on transportation from all branches of government – legislative, judicial, and executive, as well as federal, state, and city governments.

FR1: Bring Back the Buses

I respectfully ask the representative to address that Transportation is an art of big problems that need to be fixed. Not everyone has vehicle transportation and vehicles in America play a huge part in transportation. It impacts students because they cannot reach school on time and some of them get rejected on the buses. Student's are late to school almost everyday. Adult's in the bus sometimes argue with student's. This affects people's lives by not getting to work or school because the bus is full with student's and passengers.

It matters because I ride the RTA bus to school and it's my only transportation. We need to bring back the school buses. Across the world student's are struggling and have challenges to get to school because of the weather sometimes. The DPS schools are using a lot of gas to these buses, and gas costs money.

The Ohio Department of Education has a responsibility to do something about our lack of school transportation. The Ohio government will need to help us bring back the school buses and solve the problem. Bring back the school buses by investing more in school transportation.

These calls are being ignored because the people who run the problem have their own cars so they can't see what's the problem. Most of us are not old enough to drive.

We need representatives to speak up and bring back school buses. You have the power to propose new laws to the legislative branch, and you can call for investigations. We're asking you to use your power to help keep kids safe. Student's freeze and end up sick. They get harassed. If we continue to let transportation suffer, students will not get the education needed. If we do get every kid a bus again, life will be a dream. Can you bring back the school buses?

AT3: Help Students Who Struggle with Transportation

Parents talk about how much stress comes from not having reliable transportation for kids whose parents are not able to find transportation to and from school. Students are tired of having to ride the RTA with people who have an addiction, people who don't care how they smell, or even people who don't know how to act around children. People need the government to help fund busing for kids still

in highschool. *This law seeks to make busing cheaper and more reliable by setting up a district-wide program to lend school transportation.*

This law will keep kids safe and get them to school in time for a minimal investment from lawmakers. The government can take 5% out of our taxes to help fund buses for our kids. The district will start by inviting parents and students to come down and voice an opinion about this law. The district will provide buses while 5% will be taken out of state and local taxes for school transportation. The district will increase pay for drivers and set aside funds each year after that to cover unexpected expenses. The program will pay \$150 bonuses to staff who recruit applicants who are hired on spot, a maximum total of \$3,050 over five years. The district can also provide a recruitment bonus of \$10 per application, up to \$1,000 per year. The investment over 5 years will transform the experience of transportation for hundreds of students who will be able to focus on finishing school instead of worrying about how they're going to get to and from there. No one should be denied transportation for public school because their parents can't afford to take them back and forth everyday.

Everyone deserves the right to an education to achieve what they want to be when they grow up. *By voting yes on this law, we will successfully make a change to school attendance and make the kids feel safe to want to come to school. We call on the school board to pass this policy to help students who struggle with transportation.*