



**Representative Cecil Thomas**

25<sup>th</sup> House District

House Bill 3 – Sponsor Testimony

*February, Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026*

Chairman Johnson, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Weinstein, and esteemed members of the Senate Armed Services, Veterans Affairs, and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present Substitute House Bill 3.

As my joint sponsor, Representative Willis, has already shared, this is a bipartisan piece of legislation that passed unanimously through the House Transportation Committee, the Finance Committee, and the full House. We are honored to take this next step today and hope to see it pass through the Ohio Senate with the same level of support.

The tragedy that led to the development of this bill is a heartbreaking and unimaginable loss for the affected families. It serves as a stark reminder of the urgency with which we must act to prevent similar tragedies in the future. The loss of any child is a pain no family should endure, and we must take bold, immediate action to ensure that no family faces this kind of grief again.

This bill is not just a response to a tragedy; it is a call for change. We must set a new, uncompromising standard for student safety on our roads.

House Bill 3 does more than adopt the recommendations of the Ohio School Bus Safety Working Group; it builds on those recommendations to create a comprehensive safety framework that we, as a state, can stand behind with confidence. This bill is a statement: safety is non-negotiable, and we will not tolerate reckless driving near school buses.

The bill's emphasis on education is a critical element. By increasing penalties for violations while also offering first-time offenders the chance to take an educational course, we strike a balance between accountability and second chances. The opportunity to avoid points on a license and reduce fines by completing the course is a forward-thinking solution that encourages responsible driving while fostering a deeper understanding of the consequences.

Additionally, House Bill 3 addresses both the immediate and long-term safety needs of our students. The 13 recommended safety features are not mere suggestions; they are essential elements designed to reduce risk and prevent future accidents. By giving local school districts the flexibility to choose which features best suit their needs, we ensure that each district can implement solutions that are tailored to their unique circumstances. This will ensure better protection for students across Ohio, regardless of the district's size or available resources.

Finally, I want to emphasize that this legislation is the result of a collaborative, inclusive effort involving experts, lawmakers, and community stakeholders, all united by a single, shared goal: to keep our children safe. This bill represents a fundamental shift in how we prioritize the safety of our children. It holds drivers accountable, it invests in critical safety measures, and it empowers school districts to implement the best solutions for their communities.

I urge this committee to act swiftly and decisively in moving this bill forward. Our children deserve nothing less than our full, unwavering commitment to their safety. Let's take this opportunity to make Ohio's roads safer for every student who boards a school bus. Together, we can prevent future tragedies and give families the peace of mind they so rightfully deserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We welcome any questions you may have.