



## **Ohio Senate**

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## **Senator Theresa Gavarone**

Senate Majority Floor Leader  
2nd District

Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and fellow members of Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 62, The School Bus Safety Act.

From 2018 to August 2023, the State Highway Patrol has issued more than 16,000 citations for passing stopped school buses and other school zone violations. That is more than 16,000 times a child's life was placed in danger due to the reckless action of driver. I would emphasize that this is just citations issued, the number of people who have taken the action of passing a school bus illegally is much higher as it is often difficult to identify the driver or get a clean read of the license plate.

As many of you may remember, this issue is not new to me. I have introduced legislation in the past on school bus safety after learning about incidents from my districts where children narrowly escaped from danger as the result of reckless drivers passing a stopped bus illegally, but sadly, not all have been able to escape a parent's worst nightmare. No parent should ever have to worry about their child traveling to and from school. The bill presented to you today will work to curb these incidents and keep our children safer.

Senate Bill 62 creates a \$300 civil penalty for drivers who pass a stopped school bus illegally. Of that penalty, \$50 will go towards the School Bus Safety Fund housed in the State Treasurer's Office. School districts would be able to apply for dollars from this fund to improve safety features on busses, and for school bus safety education. The other \$250 from the civil penalty would go to the school districts for the purpose of acquiring and maintaining cameras, and to offset a law enforcement agency's costs related to reviewing recorded images and issuing the notices of violation.

Two important things to note in regards to the cameras. One, this is not a mandate to have cameras. Districts can choose to install this technology on their busses, but with one caveat – districts can not pick and choose routes to have these cameras. If the district elects to install cameras, they must do so for all bus routes. Secondly, the idea is that the ones who will be funding this will be those who decide to take the reckless action of illegally passing a stopped school bus.

To be clear, if someone does pass a school bus illegally and there is evidence to prosecute criminally, then the driver should be prosecuted.

The goal of this legislation is to deter those from putting our children at risk through the reckless action of passing a stopped school bus. Our children's safety is of the utmost importance. A parent should not fear for the child's safety as they travel to and from school. At the end of the day, making the decision to

pass a stopped school bus illegally is selfish and dangerous. There is no destination that a driver needs to get to that is worth more than a child's life.

28 states have passed the same or similar legislation, including Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee.

Chairman Manning, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 62. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.