



www.lsc.ohio.gov

OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

Office of Research
and Drafting

Legislative Budget
Office

H.B. 3
(with AMO735-4)
136th General Assembly

Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 3's Bill Analysis](#)

Version: In Senate Armed Services, Veterans and Public Safety

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Willis and C. Thomas

Local Impact Statement Procedure Required: No

Maggie West, Senior Budget Analyst, and other LBO staff

Highlights

- The bill appropriates \$10 million in FY 2026 from lottery profits to the Department of Education and Workforce to support grants for the purchase of new safety features on school buses, the same amount appropriated for this purpose in the current main operating budget. The bill also establishes the School Bus Safety Fund to receive criminal fines and a portion of civil penalties collected for failing to stop for a stopped school bus. Fine revenues credited to this new fund will also be used for school bus safety grants.
- The bill expressly authorizes the use of cameras on school buses to capture images of a person illegally passing a school bus and establishes a civil enforcement scheme for certain violations when the driver's identity cannot be established. The civil penalty is a fine of \$300, which is distributed as follows: (1) \$50 to the bill's newly created School Bus Safety Fund, and (2) \$250 to the entity responsible for the operation of the school bus that captured the violation and used for school bus safety technology initiatives.
- The bill's redirection of criminal fine revenue to the School Bus Safety Fund may result in a decrease in fine revenue that would otherwise have been credited to a county's treasury and used for the maintenance and repair of the highways within that county.
- Certain law enforcement agencies may incur additional costs related to conducting investigations and issuing criminal citations, civil notices or warnings of violation, and entering into memorandums of understanding with entities that utilize school bus violation detection monitoring systems.
- Municipal and county courts will experience some administrative costs to implement the bill's new civil enforcement scheme for violations of illegally passing a school bus captured by a school bus violation detection monitoring system for certain violations when the

driver's identity cannot be established. These courts may also experience an increase in caseloads; related costs may be offset to some extent by court cost revenue, if assessed and collected.

- The Ohio Department of Public Safety will incur minimal costs to: (1) draft and adopt rules relating to the construction and design of school bus camera equipment, (2) comply with the bill's graphic display requirement and creation of additional educational information for deputy registrar locations, and (3) establish a school bus safety course.

Detailed Analysis

The bill (1) appropriates \$10 million in FY 2026 from lottery profits in Fund 7017 appropriation line item (ALI) 200413, School Bus Safety, to support grants for the purchase of new safety features on school buses, (2) expressly authorizes the use of cameras on school buses to capture images of a person illegally passing a school bus, (3) enhances the criminal penalties for failing to stop for a stopped school bus and establishes a civil enforcement scheme for certain violations when the driver's identity cannot be established, and (4) places additional duties on the Ohio Department of Public Safety (ODPS) related to the adoption of administrative rules, creation of educational materials, and school bus safety course development. Additional details are provided below.

School bus safety grants

The bill appropriates \$10 million in FY 2026 from lottery profits in Fund 7017 ALI 200413, School Bus Safety, for the Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) to provide grants to school districts and educational service centers (ESCs) to purchase new safety features on school buses. H.B. 96, the main operating budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027, also appropriates the same amount from ALI 200413 in FY 2026 for essentially the same purpose.

The bill also establishes the School Bus Safety Fund to collect revenue from criminal fines and a portion of civil penalties for failing to stop for a stopped school bus and requires the fund to be used for school bus safety grants (see the "**Fine and fee revenue**" section below for additional details). For FY 2026, presumably the School Bus Safety Fund will be used in conjunction with the bill's appropriation from lottery profits since fine revenue credited to the new fund will take time to accumulate.

The bill's school bus safety grants are available to school districts and ESCs to purchase, install, or replace safety features on school buses. A school district or ESC desiring a school bus safety grant must apply to DEW for funding. The bill provides discretion to DEW in establishing procedures and requirements associated with the grants, including grant amounts. Grantees must spend the funds within two years of receiving them. The bill allows DEW to use up to \$100,000 of the appropriation in FY 2026 to administer the grant program. The bill reappropriates the available balance of ALI 200413 at the end of FY 2026 for the same purpose in FY 2027.

School bus camera use

The bill expressly allows school districts; ESCs; county boards of developmental disabilities; community schools; science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) schools; chartered nonpublic schools; and federal Head Start programs to purchase, install, operate, and maintain school bus cameras, including violation detection monitoring systems, on

school buses or to contract with a private vendor to do so. If the cameras used are school bus violation detection monitoring systems, the bill requires the entity to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the appropriate local law enforcement agency to ensure that the agency reviews the recorded images, the agency is reimbursed for its review expenses, and there is appropriate enforcement support for issuing civil notices of violation. The bill also prohibits any contract with a vendor from requiring the vendor to be paid exclusively based on the number of tickets generated or collected from the use of the school bus violation detection monitoring system and limits any portion of vendor payments based on tickets to \$150 per ticket.

Some school districts have already purchased and installed cameras on school buses to capture images or video of drivers illegally passing a bus. The cost varies depending on the number of buses in a district's fleet; the type, number, and quality of camera; and the method of procurement. Some buses have one camera per bus, usually located near the stop-arm on the driver's side. Others are equipped with additional cameras inside or outside the bus. The per-bus cost may be up to several thousand dollars based on the experience of Ohio school districts that have already purchased and installed such cameras.

The administrative cost for school districts and other public schools to enter into a formal MOU with a local law enforcement agency is likely minimal at most. School districts that have already installed cameras or violation detection monitoring systems and do not have a formal MOU or similar written arrangement presumably work with law enforcement on an ad hoc basis.

Failing to stop for a stopped school bus

Penalties

The bill increases the base penalties for failing to stop for a stopped school bus and establishes new penalties, including civil infractions, for certain repeat offenders. The following table compares those penalties. The bill specifies that the offender is not subject to a jail term or community residential sanction. Under continuing law, failing to stop for a stopped school bus is an unclassified misdemeanor.¹

In calendar year 2024, the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) reported a total of 933 criminal violations of illegally passing a school bus statewide.² For calendar years 2020 through 2024, that number totaled 3,282 and averaged 656 violations per year. It should be noted however, that OSHP generally enforces traffic laws along state-maintained roadways (e.g., highways and state routes). Statewide local law enforcement statistics are incomplete, but likely minimal per jurisdiction compared to overall traffic offenses. The number of those citations that involved repeat offenders is uncertain.

¹ An unclassified misdemeanor is a misdemeanor that is not otherwise categorized as being first, second, third, or fourth degree, or as a minor misdemeanor.

² These statistics were obtained from the Ohio State Highway Patrol's Statistical Analysis Unit and represent all of the Patrol's enforcement incidents involving R.C. 4511.75 and do not represent convictions.

Failing to Stop for a Stopped School Bus – Criminal Penalties

Type of Penalty	Existing Law	H.B. 3 Penalties	
		First Offense	Subsequent Offense*
Points Assessed	2	2	4
Fine	Up to \$500	\$250 to \$1,000	\$350 to \$2,000
License Suspension	Class 7 (up to one year)	Class 6 (3 months to 2 years)	Class 5 (6 months to 3 years)

*Applies to a subsequent offense when the offender had a violation within a five-year period.

By explicitly allowing images captured by school bus cameras to be used as evidence in these cases, it is possible that geographical areas covered by those school districts that have installed or, as a result of the bill, choose to install cameras on school buses may experience an indeterminate increase in convictions for stopped school bus violations. Thus, those geographical areas may also experience a related increase in fine revenue and the number of license suspensions imposed.

In addition to the criminal penalty structure, the bill creates a civil enforcement scheme that allows a local law enforcement agency to issue a civil notice of violation, or warning, to the vehicle's registered owner based on evidence obtained from a school bus violation detection monitoring system when the driver's identity cannot be established. The civil penalty for illegally passing a school bus is a fine of \$300. The bill specifies that law enforcement can issue a criminal citation or a civil notice of violation, but not both for the same incidence.³

If an offender fails to pay a civil penalty or any related court costs and fees, the bill gives the court with jurisdiction over the civil action the authority to notify the Registrar of Motor Vehicles of the offender's failure to pay. If notified, the Registrar must suspend the vehicle owner's registration and transfer of registration privileges until the civil penalty and all related costs have been paid. As a result, the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV), which is housed under ODPS, may experience a no more than minimal increase in the amount of existing staff time and resources to suspend and reinstate vehicle registration privileges under the bill.

Law enforcement costs

Certain law enforcement agencies may incur additional costs to conduct investigations into alleged violations of illegally passing a school bus (including the review of any images or video obtained from a school bus camera and submitted as corroborating evidence), to issue a criminal citation, civil notice of violation, or warning, as appropriate, and to comply with the bill's

³ The bill specifies that OSHP may only issue criminal citations and warnings and may not use the bill's civil enforcement scheme.

court filing procedures and mailing requirements.⁴ It is also possible that an officer who issues a citation may have to appear in court if the violation issued is contested. The magnitude of potential costs incurred will vary by agency, depending on whether the agency has entered into an MOU with an entity that uses school bus violation detection monitoring systems for purposes of civil enforcement and has installed cameras on all school buses with regular transportation routes, the number of alleged violations reported, and the amount of staff, time, and resources available to dedicate to such enforcement.

Local criminal justice system costs

By permitting images captured by school bus cameras of those illegally passing a stopped school bus to be used to corroborate a school bus operator report of a violation, the bill could generate additional cases for municipal, county, and mayor's courts to adjudicate and sanction or make some existing cases easier to prosecute. Unlike certain other traffic offenses that can be settled without a court appearance, continuing law specifies that a person cited for failing to stop for a stopped school bus must appear in court to answer the charge.⁵ If the bill generates additional cases due to the availability of evidence provided by cameras, local courts with jurisdiction over state traffic law violations would have to expend additional time and resources to dispose of those cases, the magnitude of which will vary by court depending on the number of violations reported and adjudicated.

Additionally, by creating a new civil enforcement scheme for illegally passing a school bus, municipal and county courts will likely have to expend additional time and resources to implement the new process.

Fine and fee revenue

Criminal fines

The bill diverts fine revenue that is currently collected and retained by courts for failing to stop for a stopped school bus and redirects it to the bill's new School Bus Safety Fund. As a result, courts would lose up to \$500 in criminal penalty fine revenue for each failure to stop for a stopped school bus violation adjudicated that would otherwise have been paid into the county treasury where the violation occurred and used for the maintenance and repair of highways within that county.⁶ As seen in the above table, the School Bus Safety Fund may collect \$250 to \$2,000 in fine revenue from certain offenders convicted under the bill. The amount of fine revenue foregone by any given court and credited to the School Bus Safety Fund will depend on the number of failing to stop for a stopped school bus convictions and whether the offender had a prior conviction.

License reinstatement fees

Under continuing law, a court-ordered license suspension that is 90 days or longer is subject to a \$40 reinstatement fee. All failing to stop for a stopped school bus license suspensions imposed

⁴ The bill permits a law enforcement agency to utilize an agent (such as the contracted private vendor for the cameras) to send a civil notice of violation to the registered vehicle owner and to file a certified copy of the civil notice of violation with the municipal or county court with jurisdiction over the civil action.

⁵ R.C. 4511.75(F)(1).

⁶ R.C. 4513.35.

under the bill will be subject to the \$40 fee when it may not have applied under existing law. As a result, ODPS may experience a no more than minimal gain in annual license reinstatement fee revenue. Reinstatement fee revenue is credited to the Public Safety – Highway Purposes Fund (Fund 5TMO) and used in part to support the Bureau of Motor Vehicles' (BMV) operations.

Reduction of fines for attending school bus safety course

The bill requires an offender who has pleaded guilty to or been convicted of a failing to stop for a stopped school bus violation within a five-year period to attend and successfully complete a school bus safety course established by ODPS. For a first-time offender, the bill permits a court to impose a lesser fine of \$150 and waive the assessment of points that would otherwise be assessed against the offender for failing to stop for a stopped school bus if the offender successfully completes the school bus safety course within a specified time frame. This may generate additional administrative work for certain clerks of court by having to verify that an offender has successfully completed the school bus safety course and reduce to some degree the amount of fine revenue credited to the School Bus Safety Fund for violations. The magnitude of any impact will vary by court and will depend on the number of first-time offenders charged with failing to stop for a stopped school bus, as well as the number of those offenders that successfully complete the course. The costs to ODPS to establish the course is likely to be minimal.

Civil penalties

Revenue generated from the bill's civil penalty is distributed as follows: (1) \$50 to the School Bus Safety Fund, created by the bill, and (2) \$250 to the entity responsible for the operation of the school bus that captured the violation for school bus safety technology initiatives, which may include defraying the costs of purchasing, installing, operating, and maintaining school bus violation detecting monitoring systems, and offsetting a law enforcement agency's costs related to reviewing recorded images and issuing civil notices of violation. The bill specifies that no more than \$150 can go to any private vendor under contract with the entity. The magnitude of potential civil fine revenue generated is indeterminate and will likely vary by jurisdiction based on the number of civil notices of violation issued by law enforcement and sanctioned by the courts. As described above, the civil penalty revenue deposited into the School Bus Safety Fund must be used by DEW to provide school bus safety grants to school districts and ESCs to purchase, install, or replace safety features on school buses.

Administrative rules, educational materials, and course development

The bill may result in additional one-time costs for ODPS and to a lesser extent DEW (who serves in a consultative role only), to adopt rules related to the construction and design of school bus camera equipment used to capture violations of illegally passing a stopped school bus. ODPS will also incur one-time costs to develop a graphic that instructs drivers to stop and yield to a stopped school bus and distribute those graphic cards to each of the approximately 200 deputy registrar locations statewide. Those costs are expected to be one-time and minimal, being absorbed utilizing existing staff and resources.

Additionally, the bill specifies that the Registrar and deputy registrars are to provide access to (instead of include, as under current law) specific school bus safety-related information whenever a driver's license or license plate (instead of only a license plate under current law) is

issued, and expands that information to also include a summary of the process that allows a person with first-hand information regarding illegally passing a school bus to corroborate a school bus operator's report. The bill also requires that these materials be made available the BMV's website.

“School Bus Safety Awareness Month”

The bill designates August as “School Bus Safety Awareness Month” to increase public awareness of the need to properly stop when a stopped school bus is loading and unloading passengers. This provision has no direct fiscal effect on the state or political subdivisions, as it requires no action by the state or political subdivisions.