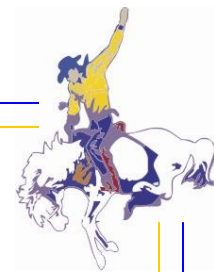


St. Marys City Schools



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Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee Senate Bill 23 Proponent Testimony February 9, 2021

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to you today in support of Senate Bill (SB) 23, the "School Bus Safety Act". My name is Dan Grothause and I am the Transportation Supervisor with the St. Marys City School District in Auglaize County.

The St. Marys City School District appreciates Senator Gavarone introducing this legislation that will have a positive impact on student safety in and around school buses.

The number of vehicles passing stopped school buses is alarming. Information obtained through a recent survey in which over 180 Ohio districts participated recorded 1,521 violations in a single day, an unacceptable number when you considers child safety is involved.

The Transportation Department in the St. Marys City School District and others throughout the state take student safety very seriously. We go to great lengths to educate the students on proper safety procedures while entering and exiting the bus. We are monitoring traffic, using high visibility reflective tape on the buses, have upgraded the red warning lights to strobe lights and use white strobe light on top of bus, all in an attempt to bring attention to fact that a school bus is present and stopped to load or unload students.

While doing all of this, if a stopped school bus violation occurs we are still required to get license plate number and driver description as part of the information provided to law enforcement. That is why the use of cameras to capture this information will greatly increase the likelihood of violators being held accountable for their actions.

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Included within this bill, in addition to current law, is a provision that allows law enforcement to issue a ticket for a civil violation to the vehicle owner if driver cannot be identified which will be very helpful.

I do however have a concern with the language in lines 65 to 68 of the as introduced version of the bill requiring cameras be installed on all actively operated bus. The proposed language reads "The entity responsible for operation of the school bus that is the subject of the alleged violation has installed a camera pursuant to section 4511.76 of the Revised Code on **all school buses actively operated by the entity**".

While this may sound practical for districts that choose to contract with a vendor to install the cameras on the entire fleet for a fee on each recorded violation, there are districts, such as St. Marys City Schools, that prefer to purchase and install the cameras on an as needed basis and do not have the resources to install cameras on all school buses. I respectfully ask that this language be modified to not include the requirement that cameras be installed on all district school buses.

While the penalties are a punitive reactive action I am very supportive of August being designated as "School Bus Safety Awareness" month and also the creation of the "School Bus Safety and Education Fund".

These two items will provide the state and districts with resources to be more proactive in an attempt to stop the violations before they occur. The development of public service announcements could help in bringing public awareness to the growing problem of illegally passing a stopped school bus and hopefully reduce the need for punitive action.

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for your time and attention. I encourage your modification and support of SB 23.

Sincerely,

Dan Grothause
Transportation Supervisor
St. Marys City Schools