



Wednesday, March 11, 2009  
Written Testimony of Cliff Gibson  
Chief Operating Officer  
Dattco, Inc.

**Regarding: Senate Bill 1096 - AN ACT CONCERNING FINGERPRINTING  
METHODS USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

Good morning Representative Guerrero, Senator DeFronzo, Representative Scribner, Senator Boucher and other distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Cliff Gibson, and I am the Chief Operating Officer of DATTCO, Inc. Our company is a Connecticut based, family-owned transportation services company, with over 80 years of experience providing passenger bus transportation in Connecticut. Our fleet includes 700 school buses, approximately 100 motor coaches, and 50 shuttle vehicles. All tolled, we transport tens of thousands of students, commuters, tour passengers, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities on a daily basis across our state, southern New England and the Northeast. I thank you for this opportunity to speak directly to you today on behalf of our 1500 employees, each of whom are dedicated to the passengers we carry, and to the safe and reliable transportation services we provide.

I am here today to testify on behalf of Senate Bill 1096 - AN ACT CONCERNING FINGERPRINTING METHODS USED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES. This proposal attempts to address the screening and processing of fingerprints for school bus and other commercial driver applicants. The legislation calls for the utilization of electronic fingerprint processing for applicants seeking a commercial driver's license for school buses and some other passenger endorsements. While we are encouraged by the idea of adding needed technology to this currently slow, cumbersome, and mostly manual process, the legislation as currently written will not remedy any of those delays in clearing applicants with which the industry is currently burdened and limited. These delays result in wasted funds, ineffective training schedules, and the loss of qualified applicants who simply cannot wait several months to receive a clearance of their fingerprint checks, and become gainfully employed as drivers. In many cases, after completing training, the applicants simply drift away and remain unemployed, or seek employment elsewhere. This clearly is a waste of resources, the cost of which is ultimately born by the taxpayers when bus contracts are negotiated or placed out for bid.

I will speak directly to my own company's experience, but I am aware of numerous situations of a similar nature, experienced by other school bus firms in our state. The subject of these processing delays has been discussed formally with the DMV, without success. At the present time, the system utilized by the Department of Motor Vehicles

results in exorbitant delays in screening the background and fingerprints of applications forwarded by companies like ours. We all acknowledge the importance of thorough screenings for these critical positions carrying children. This is not in dispute. However, the present processing cycle for fingerprint clearance letters ranges from a minimum of six weeks to a maximum time in excess of eleven weeks. Considering the technology that is readily available to law enforcement officials today, there is no plausible reason why these clearances cannot be thoroughly handled and processed in a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 14 days. Adding this time requirement to the legislation will mandate a speedy and efficient handling of these matters, and will only improve the effectiveness of training and keeping excellent school bus and commercial passenger drivers.

As an example of the impact these delays have on the industry, let me share a few statistics with you. Since last August, our company has received applications from over 400 individuals seeking driving positions. Of those applicants, we have accepted 255 trainees, and have forwarded their fingerprint information immediately to the DMV for processing. The shortest turn around time back to us of these completed checks has been six weeks, (approximately 20% of the applications) and the longest has been 11 weeks, (20% of applications.) The average processing time is two months. We believe this is far too long to be effective, and provide us with the ability to train and graduate the best possible drivers for the industry. Of the 255 submitted fingerprint records, we have actually realized only 72 drivers, a mere 28% "rate of return" on the time and cost invested in recruitment and training process internally. An unacceptable number of highly qualified applicants lose interest, or simply cannot afford to wait for weeks on end for their clearance letters to arrive. As I mentioned, the cost of finding and keeping the best people, as we are charged to do by the school districts and communities we serve, will ultimately be passed along, and there is no need to increase these costs needlessly.

Please understand that our suggestion is meant in a constructive and positive nature. We have supported the efforts to more thoroughly screen and check the backgrounds of each and every potential driver we employ. We perform regular checks on our own employees, annually, to insure that we are in the best possible position to protect the public that we transport every day. We work closely with all regulatory agencies to understand their initiatives, their challenges, and their goals. We believe that in the end, we have similar goals. In crafting this legislation, it is absolutely imperative that those who are charged to perform the required screenings be asked to do so in an effective and efficient manner, so that the private sector can fulfill its responsibility to recruit, train, and retain the very best transporters for our children and all our citizens.

I thank you again and appreciate your consideration to include a mandatory time limit of 14 days within which all fingerprint screenings submitted are processed and returned by the DMV.