

My name is Pam Renaud. I am the Safety Coordinator for First Student's New Haven school bus operation. First Student is a Cincinnati, OH, based school transportation provider currently operating in 66 Connecticut cities and towns. First Student employs approximately 3200 individuals in Connecticut; we operate approximately 3,000 school buses in the state. In our New Haven operation alone, we transport 18,000 students per day.

I am here to speak about Raised Bill No. 1096, An Act Concerning Fingerprinting Methods Used by the Department of Motor Vehicles, and Committee Bills Nos. 5902, An Act Concerning the Removal of Snow and Ice from Motor Vehicles, and 561, An Act Concerning the Penalty for Failure to Remove Snow and Ice from Motor Vehicles.

Regarding Raised Bill No. 1096, it is essential that the DMV immediately implement the use of its electronic fingerprinting equipment in order to increase the efficiency and timeliness of background checks for school bus driver candidates. A school bus driver candidate submitting his or her fingerprints on paper cards to the DMV today can realistically expect to wait anywhere from six to ten weeks to be notified of the result of the background check. In the summer months, when school bus operators all over the state of Connecticut are training new drivers in preparation for the upcoming school year, the wait for a background check to be completed can take as long as 16 weeks or more.

We, as an industry, understand the importance of stringent background checks for the persons to whom a school bus driver's license is granted. It would be unconscionable to sacrifice the accuracy or thoroughness of the background check process simply for the sake of saving time. The pilot program in 2007 in which the DMV tested the electronic fingerprint process demonstrated its effectiveness in dramatically cutting the waiting time for the completion of background checks for school bus driver candidates. In the New Haven operation, we saw school bus driver candidates who submitted their fingerprints electronically receive their clearance in as few as two to four weeks. I know of no failures in the integrity of the background check process as a result of the faster turnaround.

Our obligation to the citizens of Connecticut is to put the very best school bus drivers on the road. We endeavor to attract the best candidates for the job. We ask those candidates to train for, obtain and maintain a Commercial Driver's License for a part-time, split-shift and seasonal job. They will be entrusted to provide safe transportation to and from school and other activities for Connecticut's youngsters. They are willing to take on that large responsibility. We then tell them that it will likely be two months before they can look forward to earning a paycheck.

Not only does the individual school bus driver candidate suffer by the wait, so does the overall bus terminal operation. The timeliness and efficiency of a school bus operation is negatively affected when there is a shortage of qualified drivers. All too frequently, the result is frustration and inconvenience for parents, students and school personnel.

I ask that the language in this Bill be modified to require that the Department of Motor Vehicles immediately implement the use of electronic fingerprinting when processing the background checks for school bus driver candidates.

With regard to Committee Bills Nos. 5902 and 561, please consider that there currently exists no safe method or specifically-designed equipment to clear snow from the roof of a school bus. It is unsafe for a driver or bus technician to climb onto a school bus in order to clear the snow on the roof or to place a ladder or other such device on an icy or snow-covered surface to reach the roof of the bus in order to remove the snow. Specially-designed devices sometimes used by trucks in which the vehicles drive under as the snow is scraped off are impractical for use by school buses as the device could damage the roof hatches, which are essential safety equipment. Further, most school buses do not operate on highways, thus minimizing the potential that snow could fall off the roof and endanger other motorists.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Pam Renaud

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