



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

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*Testimony of the Department of Motor Vehicles
Transportation Committee Public Hearing
February 17, 2010*

Proposed H.B. 5032 AN ACT TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) appreciates this opportunity to discuss school bus safety – specifically to the sections of this proposed bill. DMV's Commercial Vehicle Safety Division staff continues to work diligently to ensure the safe travel of student transportation throughout our state.

Currently, DMV has 10 certified inspectors who focus specifically on school bus and student transportation vehicle safety. Each year, this unit inspects about 9,600 school buses and other student transportation vehicles.

While this proposed bill specifically requires DMV staff to conduct random unannounced inspections of any registered school bus, inspectors from the agency already perform about 90 inspections without warning each year. The unannounced inspections are in addition to the annual required inspection DMV staff must perform on every school bus prior to the department issuing a new registration or renewal of a registration. An increase in random inspections will require an increase in staff.

This proposed bill also requires DMV to create a telephone number to allow the public to report the unsafe or illegal operation of a school bus. Each report would then have to be investigated by DMV staff. DMV appreciates the spirit of this action, however the agency believes there is a more efficient process to handle this type of situation. DMV believes that the public should contact their local law enforcement office to report the unsafe or illegal operation of a school bus. Local law enforcement would be able to act on the complaint more quickly than DMV inspectors, who are scattered throughout the state on a daily basis. DMV believes local law enforcement is in the best position to take any necessary and immediate enforcement action involving the operation of a school bus. Additional staff will be needed to follow up on complaints regarding the operation of a school bus.

Although DMV inspectors conduct traffic enforcement duties and cite school bus drivers who illegally operate their buses, the inspectors' main focus is examining

the mechanical safety of the bus itself. To that end, DMV has an efficient and effective program to execute its duties. In Connecticut, accidents are rarely caused as a result of the mechanical failure of a school bus.

For example, last year there were 29 serious accidents that involved a school bus in Connecticut. A serious accident is defined by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration as leading to a vehicle towed, requiring a person to be sent to the hospital, or causing a fatality. DMV inspectors examined each of the 29 school buses involved in those reported accidents. It was determined that none of those accidents were caused by the mechanical failure of the school bus involved.

The Department of Motor Vehicles and its staff look forward to working with members of the Transportation Committee on this important issue.

