

Madam Chair, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Billie Jo Vincent from Middlebury, CT and I am here in support of change to bill 430 which is "An act concerning Emergency service personnel." I am a school bus driver for the children of Region 15. On Wednesday January 29<sup>th</sup> of this year, I was taking elementary school children home from school, when my red SOS lights were run by a police officer on his way to a call. I am positive that the officer slowed when driving through my lights, which indicates to me that he saw my lights and sign. It is my belief that the one person you should never have to worry about running school bus lights is an emergency vehicle. The child was already off the bus, and halfway across the street when I saw the officer coming up on the left side of my bus. I blew my horn! Thankfully, the child stopped, knowing that this meant danger. ~~The officer also stopped, hearing the horn.~~ So the child was able to continue crossing, both hurriedly and startled. I am left to wonder did this officer use "due regard" for the safety of all others and was this a true emergency, since there was already another officer and an ambulance on scene. Collisions are the leading cause of injury, death and legal liability to emergency responders in our country.

The lights of a school bus should mean one thing, Children are entering or exiting the bus and children are unpredictable. "Any bus driver would tell you, it's very frightening to be sitting in that seat and not able to stop a car that's not going to stop!" People think that it is buses crashing that endanger their children. It's Not! Statistically the most dangerous part of your child's day is getting on and off their bus. No one, other than the bus driver knows how many children get off at a stop or how many cross. I understand the few extra seconds it takes emergency responders to get to the scene of a call after

stopping for a school bus, with lights engaged is crucial, but not worth the preventable death of a child. Many municipalities, including fire and ambulance, have already made it their standard procedure to wait for some sort of response from the bus driver, letting them know all children are accounted for, and it is safe for them to proceed. If they don't wait, and something happens to a child, they are no longer going to be able to respond to the original call because they have now created an emergency and potential tragedy. Now that responder is part of an accident and the original emergency waits for the next closest responder. Seconds turn to minutes, at best.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep our children safe. If we work together, we can make all the difference. Thank you all for your time and consideration in this matter.