

Bonnie Geller – Resident of Riverside, CT

## **I am tired of watching the news, seeing grieving parents advocating for the cause that killed their child.**

I would like to be in Hartford today to provide testimony, but I cannot leave my child or job to travel this week on a few days' notice. This does not mean that I don't feel passionately about this topic. Why does it take a tragedy to do the right thing? Why can't we be preventative---and save lives before something horrible happens? Other states, like New York and New Jersey, already have seatbelts on school buses. Have you been on I-95? It makes me want to move out of Connecticut for the safety of my child.

Before our children are even born, one of the first things we do is purchase a car seat for them. We continue to install car seats and boosters as our children grow to protect them. We go to the fire or police station and ensure proper installation. Safety on the road is the law when it comes to our children being transported in cars. Why is the concern not the same for school buses?

In recent years, the National Highway Safety Traffic Administration's Click it or Ticket campaign has been enforced nationwide to promote seatbelt use in motor vehicles, noting: "No matter where you live, buckling up continues to be the single most effective way to reduce the risk of injury or death in motor vehicle crashes. Most people who die in collisions are not wearing a safety belt."

Since I have become passionate about this issue, there were two bus incidents in Greenwich of which I am aware. In 2014, a school bus crashed into a tree. All 13 students apparently suffered a range of injuries, from scrapes and bruises to broken bones. Thankfully, the injuries were not life threatening; but broken bones can be incredibly painful and affect children's daily activities, emotional health, and future growth and development. Do we only do something when the absolute worst has happened?

A second incident occurred on a North Mianus school bus returning home from a field trip. The driver was trying to avoid a potential accident and stopped short. All of the kids and chaperones were jolted forward. They were taken to the hospital to be checked out. A few children had some "minor" injuries, but isn't that enough? If the children had been wearing seatbelts, they probably would not have been hurt at all. Thankfully, this incident happened after the bus got off the highway, on a side street where the bus was not moving that quickly. Either way, seatbelts could have secured our children from being jolted forward. I would imagine the driver would feel better as well, knowing that the kids were safely buckled in.

There are probably many more incidents throughout the state and the country for which I am not aware. These are just two incidents that happened locally within our small neighborhood within a few months.

School buses travel on I-95 and other dangerous highways throughout Connecticut. Can you imagine traveling on these roads without your seatbelt? Do you really want YOUR child on these highways without proper protection? How is it that we allow our children, our most precious cargo, to do so? It seems irresponsible to me. Chartered buses have seatbelts, but buses that transport our children do not. I have spoken to dozens if not hundreds of parents in Greenwich. If funding is an issue, parents would donate what they could and fundraise to make this change happen.

Please help us protect our children BEFORE something tragic happens. Why do we have to wait until someone dies? It will be TOO LATE. Let's SAVE lives, not GRIEVE them!