



Connecticut School Transportation Association

171 Market Square, Suite 209, Newington, CT 06111 (860) 953-2782 Fax (860) 953-8404

Labor Committee Public Hearing

February 14, 2019

SB 1 An Act Concerning Paid Family and Medical Leave
HB 5003 An Act Implementing a Paid Family Medical Leave Program

Thank you for allowing the Connecticut School Transportation Association (COSTA) to offer testimony today on two bills, SB 1 and HB 5003, which would create a paid family medical system in the state. COSTA is a trade association comprised of owners and operators of school buses, school transportation vehicles and other associate members. Together, our companies operate more than 10,000 school buses and student transportation vehicles that transport nearly 500,000 children to and from school safely each day.

We have great concern about the impact of these two bills on school bus operators around the state. School bus drivers are a very different type of employee, because of the nature of their job. These drivers work 5 hours a day—two and one half hours in the morning picking up the students, and two and one half hours in the afternoon, dropping them off at home. During the hours in between these duties, the drivers are off the clock. They generally work a total of 25 hours per week, 180 days per year.

School bus drivers are essentially part time workers in a seasonal job. They are off during school holidays, vacations and snow days and have the entire summer off. During this off time, they are allowed to file for and collect unemployment compensation, so they are paid for the time they are not working. They return to work in the fall when the kids return to school.

It should also be noted that school bus drivers must obtain a CDL license with a special school bus endorsement in order to drive a bus. This licensing process also includes fingerprinting and a background check, as well as a proficiency test. When a driver is absent, only another properly licensed driver can take their place.

Connecticut is currently experiencing a serious shortage of school bus drivers. Most of this is due to the length of time it takes to process a school bus driver application through the Department of Motor Vehicles because of the tremendous fingerprint backlog at the Department of Emergency and Services and Public Protection (DESPP). It is taking 12-14 weeks to get school bus driver applications approved with additional time needed for training and testing, and most people cannot wait around that long to obtain a job.

COSTA does not believe school bus drivers should be included any paid family medical leave law created by the legislature, as they are essentially part-time, seasonal workers who only work 180 days per year. Their schedules allow them ample time off both during the day, the school vacations and the summer months. Allowing them additional time off would severely impact the operation of school bus companies as those buses need to run whether the driver is there or not. The safety of school children depend on those buses not only arriving, but arriving at the designated time. Unlike other occupations where you can shift employees or bring in a temporary worker, it is not that simple for a school bus driver because of the specific license, training and background check that they must obtain.

The school bus industry has been adversely impacted by the paid sick leave legislation, which was written for full time employees but imposed on all workers once they reached a certain number of hours worked. This legislation has been wreaking havoc on the school bus industry for the same reasons listed above. School bus drivers only work so many hours per year and the more time they are absent from their jobs, the more difficult it is for companies and school systems alike to function. School buses must run regardless of whether the driver is absent or not, and it is very difficult finding properly licensed replacements

We would respectfully request that school bus drivers be exempted from any paid family medical leave legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.