

# Public Safety and Security Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-420

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING ILLEGALLY PASSING A SCHOOL BUS.

**Vote Date:** 3/19/2024

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/12/2024

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. Fred Gee, 126th Dist.

Rep. Gary A. Turco, 27th Dist.

### REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill will authorize municipalities to establish an ordinance regarding motorists illegally passing a school bus. The substitute language is mainly technical and doesn't change the policy of the bill. An in-depth study of Bridgeport showed that over 10,000 motorists have been passing school buses and it is to ensure that motorists stop when they see the stoplights on the school bus.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

#### Judicial Branch, External Affairs

They have concerns about the language as the infractions issued by law enforcement is based on videos from the school bus and the Centralized Infractions Bureau. The enforcement will now be in the hands of municipalities and vendors, not law enforcement and courts. The bill confuses the state criminal process and municipal civil process which complicates an already complicated Automated Enforcement System.

### NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

#### James Walsh, Chief of Police, Norwalk Police

He believes that the legislation will allow the leveraging of local resources to safeguard our communities school-aged children. Enabling the legislation through local process, it will allow them to address violations more efficiently and effectively. Making the enforcement a more local process will allow an introduction for a more compassionate and emphatic approach to enforcement. Having enforcement at the state level can criminalize individuals for not

appearing in court while shifting it to a civil penalty framework will streamline the enforcement process and prevent the escalation of penalties. Passing this bill will deter the reckless behavior and significantly lower the incidence of these violations.

**Dr. Carmela M. David, Superintendent of Schools, Bridgeport Board of Education**

The recent study of the 9,860 vehicles passing by school buses underscores the urgent need for effective enforcement measures. They have witnessed through local experiments with camera technology the shocking prevalence of violations. The current system has limitations, and we need a more localized and efficient enforcement mechanisms. The bill shifts the violations to civil penalties including the reduction in fines and shifts it towards a more local enforcement approach. The promise is that it will increase compliance and ensure that the focus remains on safeguarding students instead of penalizing the community members unduly.

**Michael Muszynski, CCM**

They would like to note that the bill enumerates a process to ensure due process is maintained on alleged offenses. They would be in support of a larger maximum fine to act as a greater deterrence as the max fine is up to \$250.

**Steve Randazzo, Chief Growth Officer, Bus Patrol**

This bill brings the state more in line with best practices employed by over half the states including neighboring states such as New York, and Rhode Island. Bridgeport and Bus Patrol have partnered to tackle dangerous driving behavior around school buses but some flaws in state law have prevented the programs start. They have observed nearly 10,000 violations with their cameras installed on Bridgeport school buses which equates to over 2 violations per bus, per day which is eight times the national average. The US National Transportation Safety Board recommended that states adopt school bus photo enforcement programs due to a tragedy. The legislation enables the ability for local programs to be tailored to local needs and must include photos and videos on the citation which brings integrity. It will enhance due process and provides for a speedy hearing and strikes the balance with respect to a citation penalty and employing a civil violation framework. Current law can jeopardize the driver's legal standing while photo enforcement is best suited as a civil offense. The bill includes a transfer liability affidavit process for a vehicle owner to avoid penalties when the vehicle is in the care of another driver.

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

None Expressed

**Reported by: Piotr Kolakowski**

**Date: 3/28/2024**