

School Bus Proposals

School Bus Stop Arm Cameras-SUPPORT ELFA Budget Bill Part C OR A.4950 (Magnarelli)

The Council SUPPORTS cameras to enforce school bus passing laws and protect children safety.

Most school leaders would agree that their number one responsibility is to ensure the safety of students during the school day. This duty doesn't extend only to the period when students are in the school building, but also on their way to and from school. Unfortunately, reckless and distracted drivers endanger the health and welfare of students when they pass a stopped school bus that is loading or dropping off children.

This legislation would authorize, stop-arm cameras on school buses which would be utilized to enforce and penalize drivers that pass school buses with their stop arms extended. The Legislature should negotiate the differences between various legislative proposals and the Executive proposal to reach an agreement allow the installation of stop arm cameras on school buses. Whether municipalities or school districts are granted final decision-making authority over whether to install stop-arm cameras, school officials must be able to have significant influence over the final determination.

The Governor's Traffic Safety Commissioner found that over the last four years, 35 students were hit by drivers passing stopped school buses and approximately **50,000** vehicles illegally pass school buses **every day**.

Stop arm cameras will not end illegal passing of stopped school buses. It would be unrealistic to think that would be the result. However, mere presence of these cameras would act as a significant deterrent. Such deterrent will act to save lives and prevent injuries. We urge the Legislature to recognize this significant safety concern and authorize schools to utilize stop arm cameras.

School Bus Seat Belt Laws-OPPOSE TED Budget Bill Part T, Section 14

THE COUNCIL SUPPORTS opposes legislation that would could make school districts liable if students fail to wear lap belts on school buses.

Current law exempts passengers on school buses from a requirement to wear safety belts. The Executive budget would reverse this long-standing provision and require all students under the age of 16 to wear safety belts.

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Although this bill would potentially create another compliance job for bus drivers and bus attendants in ensuring that students comply with the law, we do not oppose it for that reason. Our opposition is based on new liability concerns for school districts

Schools are currently immune from liability for injuries sustained on school buses provided that the school is following all applicable laws. However, if students are required to wear seatbelts, and students fail to comply with this requirement, schools may be vulnerable to additional liability. This would increase insurance costs and potential litigation costs.

Schools will continue, as they always have, to ensure safe transportation to and from school. However, this mandate won't necessarily increase student safety, while almost certainly increasing costs. The legislature should reject this provision.