A RESOLUTION

Urging the Congress of the United States and the United States Department of Transportation to take action on the nationwide school bus driver shortage.

WHEREAS, Every day, school bus drivers have the responsibility of safely transporting this Commonwealth's most precious cargo, more than 1.5 million children, to and from school; and

WHEREAS, The ratio of school bus drivers to students transported has decreased since 2013, when the number of licensed school bus drivers in this Commonwealth was at the highest level in the last 10 years; and

WHEREAS, Federal and State laws and regulations require school bus operators to pass knowledge and driving tests and demonstrate their capability of safely operating a loaded school bus; and

WHEREAS, These requirements lead to a process that takes a substantial amount of time, approximately 12 weeks, before a school bus driver is qualified to drive students; and
WHEREAS, While Federal and State laws and regulations serve as safeguards to assure the safe transport of school children, the "under-the-hood" training requirement for commercial driver's licenses has proven to be a significant barrier to entry into the school bus industry; and

WHEREAS, The "under-the-hood" training, which is tailored for large commercial vehicles, requires a school bus driver to identify certain parts of the school bus engine and remedy them in the event of an issue; and

WHEREAS, The "under-the-hood" inspection is not applicable for school bus drivers, since their pretrip inspection does not require inspecting items in the engine bay, and in the event of a breakdown, a school bus driver remains on the bus while another individual addresses the mechanical issues; and

WHEREAS, Across this Commonwealth, school districts and school bus companies have been struggling to hire and retain an adequate number of qualified school bus drivers; and

WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the shortage, at times resulting in school districts attempting to borrow school bus drivers from neighboring school districts, to significantly modify or delay bus schedules or ultimately having no choice but to cancel an entire school day; and

WHEREAS, The number of licensed school bus drivers in this Commonwealth is declining, while the number of students needing daily school bus transportation continues to increase; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate urge the Congress of the United States and the United States Department of Transportation to take action on the nationwide school bus driver shortage; and be it further

20210SR0172PN1077 - 2 -
RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States and the United States Department of Transportation consider legislation or regulations that would ease the barriers to recruitment and retention of school bus drivers, while preserving the safety of the children on the bus, the general motoring public and pedestrians; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Congress of the United States and the United States Department of Transportation consider investigating the feasibility of developing a commercial driver's license that is specific to school bus drivers in order to reduce irrelevant training requirements; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, the chair and ranking member of the Commerce Committee of the United States Senate, the chair and ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the United States House of Representatives, the Secretary of the United States Department of Transportation, the Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the Pennsylvania Congressional Delegation.