

**TESTIMONY OF DEPUTY SECRETARY KURT MYERS  
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
SCHOOL BUS DRIVER LICENSING IN PENNSYLVANIA  
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARING  
(HARRISBURG)  
MARCH 15, 2010**

Good morning. My name is Kurt Myers, and I am the Deputy Secretary for PennDOT's Safety Administration. On behalf of Secretary of Transportation Allen Biehler, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today regarding school bus driver licensing requirements in Pennsylvania.

There are numerous requirements and agencies involved in regulating school bus drivers. As commercial drivers, these individuals must meet requirements set by the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission and PennDOT. As people who work with and around students, these individuals must also meet requirements set by the Departments of Education, Welfare, and Health.

In order to become a school bus driver in Pennsylvania, a person must meet several requirements over and above those for other commercial drivers. For ease of explanation, one example would be an applicant who is already a commercial driver with a passenger endorsement, meaning the individual can operate a charter bus.

The first step to obtaining a school bus endorsement on the commercial driver's license is to have a school bus physical performed by a health care provider. By completing the physical, the health care provider certifies to PennDOT that the applicant meets the minimum medical requirements detailed within the Department's regulations, or the provider may indicate that the driver will be required to apply for a diabetic, cardiovascular, or seizure waiver. Assuming the driver passes the physical, the form is then forwarded to PennDOT with the application for a school bus endorsement. The Department will then review the form and issue a school bus knowledge test authorization letter and a learner's permit to the applicant. These two documents allow a driver to begin the training process of becoming a school bus driver.

New school bus drivers must complete a minimum of 20 hours of instruction, including at least 14 hours of classroom instruction and six hours of one-on-one vehicle familiarity and driving instruction. The Pennsylvania school bus driver training course is administered by local school districts, contractors, or Intermediate Units (IU) under the supervision of PennDOT.

Before a driver becomes a fully credentialed school bus driver, they are required to complete a school bus specific knowledge test administered by the Department and pass a school bus skills test administered by a licensing examiner.

In addition to the requirement to become a school bus driver, a driver also has requirements to maintain their school bus endorsement. Annually, they are required to submit to a school bus physical. Also, every four years they are required to recertify by completing a minimum of 10 hours of instruction, consisting of at least seven hours of classroom training and three hours of one-on-one in-bus training. They will also be required to complete the school bus specific knowledge and skills examinations.

In addition to the requirements for a driver to become a school bus operator, the employer of a school bus driver has requirements to meet. In accordance with the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code and PennDOT regulations, employers are not to allow drivers to operate a vehicle if they do not have the credentials to do so. To that end, the Vehicle Code requires a driver to notify their employer if they have been convicted of a violation related to a vehicle or any other conviction that will impact their privilege to drive. Additionally, employers are required to annually check the employees' commercial drivers' records.

Employers have a number of service channels available to obtain driver records for their drivers. They can get the records through the mail, through PennDOT's Driver and Vehicle Services Web site or through wholesale providers. When requesting records via the mail, employers can request a 3 or 10-year history, or a certified record, which is a driver's complete history. Employers who receive driver records through the Internet or wholesale providers automatically get 10-year histories for their commercial drivers.

School Districts are able to review the records of their drivers free of charge. School bus contractors have the option of paying a \$5 fee per driver or if they use PennDOT's Internet option, they can pay an annual fee of \$200, which will give them unlimited access to their drivers' records for a year.

When an employer receives a driver's record, it will include reportable crashes that the driver was involved in. This will include the date and location of the crash as well as the type of vehicle they were driving.

Finally, it is important to note, that in accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act, drivers must give their consent for their employer to access their driver record.

The employer is bound to use the driver record solely for the purposes for which the driver gave consent. Therefore the employer, like PennDOT cannot release the information on a driver record, unless authorized to do so.

At this time, I am available to take any questions you may have. Thank you.