



Selina M. Pittenger
Executive Director

Selina Pittenger has been the Executive Director for the Pennsylvania School Bus Association since July 1, 2001. Prior to her position as Executive Director she filled the position of Administrative Assistant for ten years. From 1985 – 1991 Ms. Pittenger was the Assistant Treasurer for Pennsylvanians for Effective Government.

The Pennsylvania School Bus Association is a statewide association representing private school bus contractors. Members of the PSBA provide student transportation services to school districts in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the Pennsylvania School Bus Association is to promote and foster the highest degree of safety in the transportation of school children, to strengthen the quality of this transportation through professional management. The Pennsylvania School Bus Association provides its membership with up to date information relating to laws and regulations affecting the student transportation industry and safe transportation best practices and guidelines. This is achieved through monthly publications and educational seminars.

Ms. Pittenger is an active member of the following organizations:

Pennsylvania Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee – Served as an Alternate from 2002-2007.
Appointed to the committee by the Governor October 2007.

National School Transportation Association – Serve on NSTA's Safety and Security Committee and Association Industry Development Committee

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services – Eastern Regional Representative for the State and National Association Council

National Association for Pupil Transportation

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

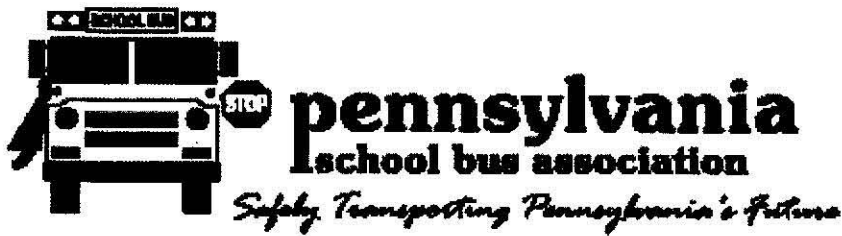
Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials

American Society of Association Executives

Pennsylvania Society of Association Executives

Selina Pittenger is a native of Pennsylvania, living in the central Pennsylvania area all her life. Selina is the mother of two sons, Timothy and Michael. She currently resides in Newport, Perry county. She attended and graduated from Elizabethtown Area School District. Ms. Pittenger attended classes at Elizabethtown College, Lock Haven University and Harrisburg Community College with emphasis on political science and accounting.

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House Transportation Informational Hearing

March 15, 2010

Good Morning Chairman Markosek, Chairman Geist and Members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Selina Pittenger and I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania School Bus Association (PSBA). The Pennsylvania School Bus Association is made up of 350 private school bus contractors who provide student bus services to school districts. 85% of the School Districts in Pennsylvania use contractors to provide student transportation services. A majority of those contractors are members of the PSBA. As an Association, our focus is to promote and foster the highest degree of safety in the transportation of school children.

Thank you for allowing us to testify about the school transportation industry and the hiring practices for school bus drivers. We would like to talk to you today about the safety aspects of riding in school buses as we feel it's important for us to share our statistics with you as you move forward in the legislative process.

Pennsylvania school districts transport over 1.5 million school students daily at public expense. This includes public, private, charter, and parochial school students in grades K-12. Over 30,000 registered school buses transport these students more than 400 million miles annually. More importantly is the fact the Pennsylvania has not experienced a student fatality on a school bus since 1993.¹

These statistics are a true testament on the safety of the school buses operated in Pennsylvania and the highly skilled drivers. The PSBA has been actively involved with PennDOT reviewing school bus, school vehicle and school bus driver qualification regulations for nearly three decades. Our partnership with the Department ensures that students are transported in the safest vehicles on a daily basis. Over the last three decades school buses have vastly improved and Pennsylvania was at the forefront mandating safety equipment on school buses and extensive school bus driver training before any other state in the Nation. Pennsylvania was one of the first states to require the side stop arm and crossing gates, significantly improving safety outside the school bus where the most accidents occur. Pennsylvania's school bus driver training is one of the most extensive in the nation and one of only a few states that mandates recertification. Our

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¹ As reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Bureau of Driver Licensing, Special Driver Programs.

school bus drivers are some of the highest skilled drivers in the nation. In the last four years a Pennsylvania school bus driver has either placed first and/or second at the International School Bus Driver Safety Competition, competing with drivers from all across the nation and Canada.

Pennsylvania's school bus transportation safety record is by no mistake. State requirements mandate thorough background checks, a medical physical and training be obtained before a driver can be certified to be behind the wheel of a school bus and transporting school students. There are over 40,000 licensed school bus drivers in Pennsylvania. A school bus driver is required to obtain a CDL with passenger and school bus endorsements. A minimum of 20 hours of training by a certified school bus driver instructor must be completed before a new school bus driver can obtain the school bus endorsement.

When a new applicant applies for a school bus driver position the employer is mandated to perform several background checks on the prospective employee. These checks include a Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Background Check, the FBI Fingerprint Background Check, the Child Abuse Clearance and a Motor Vehicle Record Check. These four background checks must be performed even if the prospective employee is already a licensed school bus driver. The Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation outline the offenses that would prohibit an employer from hiring a new applicant if the conviction of the offense occurred within the last five years. Employers are to obtain a five year driving history from the Department of Transportation. The Department only issues driving histories of three years or ten years. If driving violations occurred more than ten years ago, it is not on the Motor Vehicle Record. If the report includes a report of an accident, it does not indicate fault for the accident, only that this individual or the individual's vehicle was involved in an accident on the date listed. Employers must rely on applicants to be honest and forthright when questioned about any background check information. By law, drivers with a CDL must notify their employer in writing if convicted of a traffic violation within 30 days of the conviction. In addition to the training, background checks and physical screenings, all applicants must also submit to a pre-employment drug test and once hired be placed in a random drug and alcohol testing pool.

It initially costs school districts and contractors approximately \$500 per applicant for the training, background checks, pre-employment drug test and medical physical. On average 2 out of 10 applicants will qualify to be hired.

Once a new driver has been approved to be hired by a school district, in order to maintain their school bus driver certification, a driver must complete and submit to the Department an annual physical, be included in a random drug and alcohol testing program, and complete ten hours of recertification training every four years. Pennsylvania laws and regulations describe the minimum requirements that all school districts and school bus contractors must follow. However, school districts and contractors can have more stringent policies that are above and beyond the state's minimum requirements. For example, the state requires all background checks be done prior to employment only, a majority of school districts and contractors perform background checks on their employees on a regular basis throughout their employment. Contractors request MVRs on their drivers at least once a year. Some school districts and contractors review these reports semi-annually or quarterly. A challenge for our industry with the hiring process is obtaining the four background checks in a timely fashion. Each one of the required background checks runs through four different departments and turn-around time varies from instantly for the State Police Criminal Background check and MVR, via online, to up to 30

days for the Child Abuse Clearance. One suggestion we would like to make is to streamline and consolidate all the required background checks into one submission. This would help streamline the hiring process and would ensure that all background checks were requested.

As you know, each legislative session numerous bills are introduced that would affect student transportation, whether it is improving vehicle safety, penalizing passing motorists, eliminating school bus driver distractions, or improving school bus driver qualifications.

Legislators must be aware when considering legislation that would increase unfunded costs while not providing a significant increase to safety. These unexpected and unfunded mandates put a burden on school districts whose budgets have been established calculating what the anticipated costs for transportation will be for the next school year.

The PSBA recognizes that school bus drivers have a duty to direct 100% of their attention to the safe operation of the school bus and the safety of their passengers and that talking on a cell phone or using other personal portable electronic device, whether it is hands-on or hands-free, is a distraction from their professional duties. The PSBA recommends all school bus companies adopt the following policy: ***Drivers may not use a cell phone or other personal portable electronic device while operating a school bus or any other vehicle transporting students, including loading and unloading students, except in an emergency. For the purpose of this policy, an emergency exists if the driver requires immediate assistance to ensure the safety of his/her passengers or to report a dangerous or life-threatening situation.***

Because of our belief that driver distraction is a leading cause for many accidents we support legislation that would prohibit texting and limit cell phone use. We would further recommend that additional penalties be added to a motorist who passes a stopped school bus while loading or unloading while using a cell phone or other electronic device.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I would be happy to take any questions that you may have at this time.