



**House Transportation Committee
Public Hearing
Pedestrian, Crosswalk & School Zone Safety
September 20, 2012**

Good Morning Chairman Geist, Chairman McGeehan and Members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Selina Pittenger, Executive Director for the Pennsylvania School Bus Association. The Pennsylvania School Bus Association (PSBA) is made up of 325 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 the PSBA to testify about the school transportation industry and pupil transportation safety. School bus safety and pupil transportation safety involve two similar, but different concepts. School bus safety concerns only those children on school buses. Pupil transportation safety relates to all children going to and from school and school-related activities, no matter what mode of transportation used.

I am here today to talk to you about the latter, pupil transportation safety. The PSBA applauds the General Assembly's efforts to strengthen the safety in school zones and crosswalks. Our industry is very proud of our safety record for pupils riding to and from school on school buses. We share the same concerns for the pupils that are walking to the school bus stops and for those who are not eligible for school bus transportation and are walking to and from school.

Due to school district budget constraints and increased fuel costs over the last several years, school districts have revised their school bus routes and school bus stops. Many school students are walking further distances to school bus stops than they were before. While this has increased school bus transportation efficiencies and controlled transportation costs, it has also increased the number of school students walking to and from school.

Each year the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation partners with the Pennsylvania State Police, local law enforcement, school districts and school bus contractors and conducts Operation Safe Stop. This annual awareness campaign targets motorists that illegally pass a stopped school bus while loading or unloading. Annually, in Pennsylvania, approximately 1,000 motorists are cited for not obeying the school bus stopping laws. Many more motorists are violating the law but are not cited due to lack of information able to be obtained in the few seconds a school bus driver is able to capture the information to report a violator. Today, we are two to three weeks into the current school year and in spite of a wide variety of awareness campaigns about pupil transportation safety there have been several school students injured by a passing motorist while students were proceeding to board or exiting a school bus.

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School districts make every effort to ensure that the routes students use to walk to school and to school bus stops are safe and free of hazards. Students are taught proper safety measures when walking to the school bus stop and while waiting for the school bus. In spite of every effort to make the public aware about safety in school zones and around school bus loading zones, students are getting injured and killed. It is time for Pennsylvania to be more stringent with violators of the traffic laws.

The PSBA would support legislation that would increase penalties for motorists violating the pedestrian, crosswalk and school zone laws. We encourage you to consider including school bus stops in the definition of a school zone and to increase the penalties for illegally passing a stopped school bus. We believe this will help curtail drivers from this very dangerous practice.

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.