



SONDY POPE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
80TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT



August 18th, 2015

Chairman Ripp and Committee Members,

I'd like to thank Chairman Ripp and the Transportation Committee members for taking the time to hear this bill. I apologize that I am unable to personally provide testimony today as I am attending a family funeral.

This purpose of this bill is to expand the applicability of rules governing motorists passing school buses.

AB 254 is very important to me as it is one of the first bills I introduced in 2002 as a freshman in this body. More importantly this is a bill that has the potential to save lives and will bring peace of mind to many parents in Wisconsin who trust that their children will be provided safe transport on Wisconsin's school busses.

Under current law a motorist cannot be penalized for violating the state's "vehicle owner liability" law if the violation occurs on private property. This bill simply says a vehicle must stop whenever and wherever a school bus puts on its red lights and extends the stop arm. This bill extends the coverage to private roads and driveways. It is a sensible fix to ensure that motorists follow school bus safety practices regardless of location.

The idea for this bill came from a Wisconsin family who lived in a mobile home park with two cognitively disabled children. These children often neglected to look and listen before crossing the street in front of their school bus. Since the mobile home park is considered private property, motorists could not be ticketed for failing to come to a full stop both behind and in front of stopped school buses, which was often the case in this family's situation. Their parents were dismayed to learn that Wisconsin law did not apply in their community because it was considered private property. AB254 would protect children in this and similar situations where buses would need to traverse through private property such as longer shared private drives, retail parking locations and privately developed communities.

Passage of this bill is a minor yet important step in keeping Wisconsin children safe whenever they are boarding or getting off of a school bus. In order to be safe, children should not be required to know whether or not their path in front of a bus is on public or private property. They should be able to assume that it is always protected in Wisconsin no matter where they getting on or off a school bus.

I humbly request that this committee hold an executive session and pass this commonsense bill to the Assembly floor where upon passage, we can avoid preventable tragedies and ensure safety for motorists and children alike.

Thank you again, Mr. Chair and members, for your thoughtful consideration of this bill.



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Testimony of the Wisconsin School Bus Association
IN SUPPORT OF AB 254
Before the House Transportation Committee
August 18, 2015

Good afternoon members of the House Transportation Committee. My name is Cherie Houser and I am the Executive Director for the Wisconsin School Bus Association (WSBA) that represents more than 200 members including commercial operators, school districts, and suppliers to the industry. I am here today to speak in support of AB254.

The Association's main purpose is to promote and encourage safety in school bus transportation in Wisconsin. The Association believes that AB254 will increase the safety of transporting our most precious cargo in Wisconsin.

The proposed amendments to AB254 will add to the ability of a school bus to use its flashing red lights on a private road or driveway, which may include mobile home parks or large apartment complexes. Failure to stop for the flashing red lights by a motorist is a reportable violation by a school bus driver whereas the motorist may be subject to fines.

Some WSBA members drop off quite a few children on private property. At this time, motorists are not required to stop for a school bus's flashing red lights on private property, thus increasing the chance of a child being struck by a vehicle.

Based on a survey published in 2012 by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), the states of New Jersey, Rhode Island, Virginia, and West Virginia have the requirement in their state law to stop for a school bus on private roads or driveways if it is using flashing red lights.

Wisconsin School Bus Association believes AB254 amendments will assist in increasing the safety of children and their ability to arrive home safely. Therefore, I urge the committee to support AB254.

Thank you for your time today.

Cherie A. Houser
Executive Director