

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5114

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, MARCH 5, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring safety enhancements for student transportation.

SPONSORS: Senators Murray, Bailey, Bauer, Thorsness, Erwin, Gaspard, A. Smith, Rinehart, Madsen, Talmadge, Wojahn, Rasmussen, Conner and Snyder; by request of Task Force on Student Transp. Safety.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Craswell, Murray, Oke, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Susan Mosborg (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1991; February 7, 1991

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5114 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Craswell, Vice Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Bluechel, Cantu, Gaspard, Hayner, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Owen, Rinehart, Saling, L. Smith, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Bill Freund (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: March 4, 1991; March 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Task Force on Student Transportation Safety was established in 1989 (ESHB 2066) to develop recommendations for reducing the dangers children face as they travel to and from school. Among its 11 recommendations are equipping school buses with crossing arms; providing bus drivers student management resources; and providing special education bus drivers resources.

Crossing control arms are devices mounted to the front of buses that, when extended, force students to walk at least five feet in front of the bus. Crossing arms keep students within the bus driver's view to prevent fatalities and injuries during loading and unloading. Inside the buses, monitors have proven helpful in controlling student behavior.

Under current law, the state pays the cost of transporting students who live beyond a one-mile radius of school. The state will also pay to transport students living closer if it is determined that the student's route to school is hazardous due to traffic related conditions.

SUMMARY:

All school buses owned or contracted by school districts in the state must be equipped with a crossing arm by September 1, 1992. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is responsible for purchasing and distributing the crossing arms by October 1, 1991. School districts are responsible for their installation.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction and at least one school district shall conduct a pilot program to test the feasibility of using video cameras inside school buses to reduce student discipline problems and to assist school bus drivers in identifying students who create problems.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall submit recommendations for the increased use of aides on special education buses to the Legislature by December 1, 1991.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with school districts, the State Patrol, and local law enforcement personnel, shall develop an expanded definition of "hazardous walking conditions" to include "social hazards." These shall include, at minimum, unacceptable levels of narcotic activity, sex offenders, prostitution, street violence, and environmental health hazards. The proposed definition, guidelines for its implementation, and a projection of its fiscal impact shall be submitted to the Legislature by December 1, 1991.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The \$45,000 pilot program on use of video cameras in school buses is deleted.

The requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction submit recommendations on the increased use of aides on special education buses is deleted.

The requirement that the Superintendent of Public Instruction develop an expanded definition of "hazardous walking conditions" to include "social hazards" is deleted.

The \$700,000 for school crossing arms is deleted and the bill is made contingent on funding in the budget.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Last year a six-year old girl was killed in the state as the result of an accident that could have been prevented had the school bus been equipped with a crossing arm.

Management of student behavior has become more difficult for school bus drivers, partly because school districts are buying larger school buses for economic reasons. Also, some administrators fail to follow up on problems reported by bus drivers which causes bus drivers to bear the brunt of parents' criticisms. The task force looked at several options to reduce this problem and found the installation of video monitors to be the only affordable and most promising alternative.

Resources for special education buses would provide necessary assistance for kids who truly need special help.

Expanding the definition of "hazardous walking conditions" to include social hazards would help students who must walk past crack houses and other neighborhood dangers on their way to school.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED (Education): FOR: Members, Student Transportation Safety Task Force: Jeff Cook, Northshore School District, Jim Stevenson, Federal Way School District, Mary Weis, Federal Way School Board; Alison Timmons, Chris Pearce, parents; Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association; Jean Leonard, Seattle School District

TESTIFIED (Ways & Means): FOR: Tony Vivenco, Service Employees International Union; Julie Davidson, citizen; Don Carnahan, Superintendent of Public Instruction's office