
Education Committee

HB 2639

Brief Description: Increasing the safety of school bus riders.

Sponsors: Representatives McCabe, Santos, Johnson, Kochmar, Cody, Caldier, Muri, Kilduff and McBride.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to conduct a study to analyze the costs and benefits of requiring school buses purchased after December 2017 to be equipped with seat belts, safety harnesses, or other approved restraint systems for all passengers.

Hearing Date: 2/1/16

Staff: Ashley Fisher (786-7296).

Background:

School Bus Safety.

School buses are the safest transportation option to get children to and from school. On average, six school bus passengers are killed each year nationwide. In comparison, 2,000 children are killed in motor vehicle crashes.

School Bus Drivers.

A school bus driver is required to conduct pre- and post-trip vehicle inspections. Drivers are also trained in passenger safety protocols and must meet employment requirements, including possession of a valid commercial drivers license and passage of random testing for controlled substances.

School Bus Seat Belts.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

School buses that weigh 10,000 pounds or less are required to have lap-shoulder seat belts and seat backs 24 inches in height. Six states have passed legislation that requires seat belts on school buses that weigh more than 10,000 pounds.

In Washington, seat belts on buses built after September 2006 must be the lap-shoulder system. Anyone sitting in a seat equipped with a seatbelt is required to use it. School bus drivers must require students to wear an available seat belt.

Summary of Bill:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must conduct a study to analyze the costs, benefits, detriments, and feasibility of requiring each school bus purchased after December 2017 to be equipped with seat belts, safety harnesses, or other approved restraint systems for all passengers.

By October 15, 2016, the OSPI must submit a report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature that specifies results of the study and recommendations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.