

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5114

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 14, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring safety enhancements for student transportation.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by 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

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

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 and providing bus drivers additional resources to maintain discipline on buses.

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 passenger loading and unloading. Inside the buses, monitors have proven helpful in controlling student behavior.

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 help school bus drivers identify students who create problems.

If funding for the bill is not included in the budget, the bill shall be null and void.

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

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

By December 1, 1991 the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall review the current use of aides on special education buses and provide the Legislature with recommended guidelines, with associated fiscal impacts, for increasing the use of aides on special education buses.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with school districts, the State Patrol, and local law enforcement personnel, shall develop a proposed definition and guidelines for implementing an expanded definition of "hazardous walking conditions" that would also include "social hazards." Social hazards to be considered include unacceptable levels of narcotic activity, sex offenders, prostitution, street violence, and environmentally dangerous areas. A proposed definition and guidelines, with associated fiscal impacts, shall be submitted to the Legislature by December 1, 1991.