

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2639

As Passed House:
February 10, 2016

Title: An act relating to studying the costs and benefits of requiring school bus safety devices on new school buses.

Brief Description: Increasing the safety of school bus riders.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/1/16, 2/4/16 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/10/16, 87-9.

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Ortiz-Self, Vice Chair; Reykdal, Vice Chair; Magendanz, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stambaugh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Griffey, S. Hunt, Kilduff, Klippert, Kuderer, Orwall, Pollet, Rossetti and Springer.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Hargrove, Harris, Hayes and McCaslin.

Staff: Ashley Fisher (786-7296) and Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

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.

Background:School Bus Safety.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration finds that 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 driver license and passage of random testing for controlled substances.

School Bus Seat Belts.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) We have tell kids that if you have a seat belt on, you are safe. Some kids do not feel safe on the bus because there are no seat belts. It is a myth that school buses with seat belts are not safer; in a rollover or collision, you are safer with a seat belt on. A lot of myths surrounding unsafe factors of seat belts have been disproven. It is 45 percent safer for a child to have a seat belt on. It is time to have this conversation.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McCabe, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.