

## **Albert Belbol**

Senators, ladies and gentlemen, I come before you today as a parent of three children, two of which are elementary school age. I am also Co-President of the Norman J. Levy Lakeside Elementary School Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

These two roles in my life are not something I can turn on and off like a switch. With every fiber of my existence I am a proud and protecting father. As PTA Co-President, I have no greater concern than the health, welfare and safety of the students of my children's school. As any parent wants, I want to know that when I put my child on a school bus, that everything that can be done to keep them safe has been done.

The proposed bill before us mandating school bus ignition interlocks is essential for child safety. Every school age child is affected by school bus safety. Even if your child does not ride a bus to and from school, all children at some point take a school bus for extra-curricular activities or class trips. As a parent, I want the peace of mind that my child will be as safe as possible when they ride a school bus.

By and large, school bus drivers are well trained professionals who operate school buses in a safe manner but unfortunately some individuals in the recent past have failed to do so. All professions have some degree of "bad apples" and bus drivers are no different in this way. That reality leads us to seek solutions to protect our children.

Without this common sense legislation, we as a society are not doing our best to protect our children.

Every parent I have spoken to in the Norman J. Levy Lakeside PTA is firmly in support of this proposed legislation. Perhaps it is just coincidence but the late Senator Norman Levy was a champion of transportation safety and a legend as a public servant. I have great comfort and pride to be representing the PTA of the school named for Senator Levy and now speaking before you to support legislation he would also be championing. I can only hope that your efforts to make this bill a law will soon become a reality.

In the same manner in which Senator Levy was a pioneer of the first seat belt law, this ignition interlock law will become the standard throughout our nation. This proactive legislation will save lives for generations to come.

As stated in the justification for this bill, there have been six incidents of bus drivers driving drunk or alcohol impaired in New York State in the last three years. These are six incidents that we know of because they were reported by the media. How many more times were bus drivers driving our children drunk or alcohol impaired and never went detected?

No matter the amount of times this unacceptable situation has happened, as a parent one fact rings true: Any time it has happened until now, we as a society have let our children down. We have failed to do all we can do with laws and technology to protect our greatest asset, our children, our future. We have the technology available, now we need to enact this law to do the right thing and do our best to keep our children safe.

I want to thank you for your time today and for the opportunity to express my views on such important legislation.