



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Klein Introduces Legislation Designed to Strengthen Supervision of Minors on Party Buses and Increase Safety of Passengers

JEFFREY D. KLEIN April 17, 2014

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BRONX, NY – Amid widespread reports of underage drinking on a Long Island “party bus” earlier this week, Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) introduced legislation today to rein in the charter bus industry and to require adult chaperones for all large, underage parties aboard the “clubs on wheels.”

Senate Co-Leader Jeff Klein said: “We cannot allow our roadways to become free-for-alls for underage drinking. We are incredibly lucky that none of the children on that bus were hurt. We cannot afford to take that chance again. The sad truth is that with prom season approaching, thousands of teens will try to jump aboard party buses and abuse alcohol, all in the name of celebration. Sadly, these underage revelers

fail to understand the tragic consequences that often lay ahead. By passing this bill, we will be putting chaperones on board who can make sure that our teens are having a good, safe time and that party bus drivers can concentrate on the road."

Under the legislation, one adult chaperone—other than the bus driver—must be present for every twenty underage passengers aboard a chartered party bus. If the Klein law had been in place earlier this week, the Long Island party bus that was stopped Tuesday evening with 42 intoxicated teenagers would have had two adult chaperones on board.

The legislation would also require charter bus companies to install new safety devices on emergency exits. In recent years, numerous teenagers have been hurt and killed due to inadequate security measures aboard these buses.

Assemblyman Marcos Crespo (D-Bronx and Member of NY Assembly Transportation Committee) said: "This week's incident involving over 40 unsupervised, underage high school students, highlights the need for new laws curbing dangerous behavior aboard Party Buses. Basic regulations like mandating that underage party goers have a chaperone and installing alarms to alert drivers when emergency doors are opened will go a long way towards preventing potentially risky conduct aboard these buses. With high school proms and warm weather right around the corner, it is more critical than ever that we pass this legislation and working with Senator Klein, I look forward to doing just that."

Assemblyman Michael Benedetto (D-Bronx) said: "As we enter into graduation season, it is imperative that we have proper supervision, so that what should be a happy time for a young person doesn't turn into a tragedy."

Coachman Luxury Transport is saddened by Monday's incident, and as an industry leader we want to be part of the solution. Safety is our number one concern and Senator Klein's newly introduced legislation will bring about much needed change to ensure that party bus renters and our bus drivers stay safe," **said Matt Delaney, Owner, Coachman Luxury Transport.**

New Legal Definitions

The new legislation would amend New York State transportation law to add a new definition for the term "Party Bus." These vehicles are unique in that they permit the ability for passengers to move freely about the cabin of a bus when it is in motion. This is much different from ordinary chartered buses, such as Greyhounds, which usually include a center aisle and row seating, making it difficult for movement within the bus. Thus, party buses are particularly troublesome since they tend to attract minors who feel that their activities will be unsupervised.

New Regulations of Operating a Vehicle

The legislation would include a number of new regulations that would ensure greater oversight by instituting new common sense requirements for drivers to abide by:

A brand new party bus driver endorsement would be created that drivers of party buses will have to obtain. The Department of Transportation would be tasked with coming up with the regulations and course of instruction that drivers would have to complete to safely operate a party bus vehicle.

In order to ensure an appropriate level of adult supervision, the legislation would require one chaperone per each 20 underage passengers on a party bus, or at least one chaperone per level if a party bus has multiple levels. The chaperone, which must never be the bus driver, would have to be provided by either the bus company or the group that charters the trip. All bus drivers would now also be required to read a safety statement to the passengers prior to departure.

Party buses would be required to be equipped to provide a driver with a warning when any door, window, or portal on the bus has been opened without their authorization. This is imperative notably in the wake of

several incidents throughout the country where individuals have been killed in party buses because they fell out of the bus while it was in motion.

As a means to prevent underage drinking, drivers would be mandated to end a chartered trip if they find out that safety rules are being broken or that underage passengers are drinking alcohol or using any controlled substances. If drivers act in accordance with this provision, this will exempt their company from civil or criminal liability. In addition, new contract requirements containing the above mentioned will not have to exist. If any charter company violates these provisions more than three times, the Department of Transportation shall suspend their permit for at least six months.

Frances Maturo, President of Throggs Neck Community Action Partnership, said: "Underage drinking should never be tolerated, especially when it comes to our roadways. Senator Klein's legislation is an important step that will ensure that teenagers are appropriately supervised so that young people can celebrate safely and drivers can focus on the road."

Marge Lee, President of DEDICATEDD, said: "Senator Klein's legislation will finally put an end to foolish behavior that can put other people's lives at risk -- if not their own. As a survivor and victim that crossed paths with a drunk driver, I know that tragedy can strike at a moment's notice. When it comes to ensuring the safety of our roads and highways, we all have a solemn obligation to do our part to ensure that every driver and passenger can travel without jeopardizing their lives. We don't tolerate drinking and driving, and we shouldn't tolerate any bus operator allowing a group of underage kids to consume alcoholic beverages either."