Ritchie Secures Funds to Improve Student Safety

PATTY RITCHIE   November 16, 2017

State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing that she secured $16,000 in funding for school districts in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties that will improve the safety of students traveling to school and back home.

The funding comes on the heels of an incident last week where a Jefferson County student was nearly struck by a reckless driver as the student was getting off the school bus to go home. This incident joins the hundreds of others reported by local districts and their bus drivers as part of a survey Senator Ritchie conducted earlier this year on the number of

buses illegally passed over a five-day period. Results of that survey are available by clicking here.

"The safety of our children traveling to and from school, whether they are on the bus or walking, needs to be on the mind of every driver out on the roads. The recent number of reported incidents near our schools and school buses show that drivers are allowing themselves to lose focus while behind the wheel or simply ignoring laws designed to protect our students," Senator Ritchie said.

"I'm proud to have secured this funding, which will not only help keep our children safe, but will serve as a head-start for the upcoming 2018 legislative session where improving student and school bus safety will be a top priority of mine."

This special funding will help the following schools—which reported the highest number of illegal passes—purchase equipment to improve school bus safety, identify reckless drivers and improve safety for students who walk to and from school:

Fulton City School District: $5,000

Watertown City School District: $5,000

Massena Central School District: $3,000

Gouverneur Central School District: $3,000

"The Watertown City School District is beyond grateful for the support from Senator Patty Ritchie for some extra funding," Watertown City School District Superintendent Patricia LaBarr said. "We are fortunate to have $5,000 to support student safety - specifically for installing some campus safety protocols. Thank you Senator Ritchie! Another win for our district!"

"Student safety is the district's highest priority," Fulton City School District Superintendent Brian Pulvino said. "That priority includes student transportation to and from school. Thanks to Senator Ritchie's ongoing and tireless support of schools and in this specific case, student transportation safety, the Fulton City School District will be able to enhance school bus security systems both inside and outside the vehicles."

"The Massena Central School District is grateful for the support of Senator Patty Ritchie to enhance student safety. The passing of school buses by motorists is a continual threat to the health and welfare of our students and unfortunately, it happens on an all too frequent basis," Massena Central School District Superintendent Patrick Brady said. "It will take a community approach to deal with this problem including stronger detection and stricter law enforcement. We are appreciative of the spotlight that Senator Ritchie has placed on this issue and will be using the resources provided to support her in these efforts."

"The health and safety of our students is of the utmost importance here in Gouverneur," Gouverneur Central School District Superintendent Lauren French said. "The funding provided by Senator Ritchie to help us improve the safety of our students coming to or heading back home from school is greatly appreciated."

In the most recent legislative session, Senator Ritchie advocated for a number of measures, which passed the Senate and aim to improve student safety by increasing the penalties against drivers who break laws involving school buses and put our children at risk.

Senator Ritchie is also providing safe driving tips for drivers as they approach schools, pedestrian walkways and school buses. Those tips and more information on the proposed laws to improve student safety can be found by clicking here.