



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Bill to Allow Automated Cameras on School Buses Advances in Legislature

CATHARINE YOUNG June 12, 2018

| ISSUE: **STOP-ARM CAMERAS, SCHOOL BUS SAFETY, LAW ENFORCEMENT**



Albany, New York – With the lives and safety of New York students threatened daily by the illegal passing of stopped school buses, Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-57<sup>th</sup> District) held a press conference today to urge legislative action on a measure authorizing the use of camera devices on school buses to record and ticket stop-arm violators. Joining Senator Young was the Assembly sponsor of the bill, Assemblyman William Magnarelli (D, WF, I-129<sup>th</sup> District), as well as officials from the educational, law enforcement and advocacy communities who

urged passage of the measure before the conclusion of the legislative session.

“As every parent knows, there are an endless number of threats to our children’s safety that cause worry and concern. Yet, crossing the neighborhood road to get on or off the school bus shouldn’t be at the top of that list,” said Senator Young. “New York, like every state in the nation, has a law making it illegal for motorists to pass stopped school buses – a law that was passed to safeguard student safety. Yet, statistics tell us that an alarming number of drivers – upwards of 50,000 each day – recklessly disregard this law, senselessly putting countless children at risk in the process.”

“Just one month ago, a child in Monsey, New York was hit by a motorist who passed a stopped school bus. Thankfully, in this case, the student’s injuries were minor. However, not every child in that situation is as fortunate: The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration reports that approximately five children are killed every year by motorists who pass stopped school buses and several times that number are injured. These figures do not include the countless ‘near-misses’ that are a frequent occurrence. These are needless and unacceptable risks that underscore why this legislation is crucial.”

Currently, motorists who pass stopped school buses can only be issued a ticket if a police officer witnesses the violation. Because it is impossible for law enforcement to patrol every bus stop daily, very few violators face any consequences for their dangerous behavior.

The legislation sponsored by Senator Young, S.518B, and Assemblyman Magnarelli, A.321B, addresses this problem by allowing school districts and school bus companies to install automated cameras to detect and capture images of vehicles that fail to stop when the stop arm of the bus is extended to pick up or discharge students. It allows the evidence taken from the cameras to be used by police agencies in prosecuting violators and issuing fines.

The bill would retain the current financial penalties for stop-arm violations with fines of \$250. Unlike situations with police officers involved, the bill would not impose points or imprisonment for convictions.

Fines would cover enforcement and operational costs of the program, with localities receiving the fines directly, and school districts each receiving a portion as needed to absorb direct costs. Participating school districts would also be required to submit reports on the results of the program.

“Our student’s safety is of top concern. We owe it to our children to help protect them as they board and climb off the school bus. This bill will do just that and help protect our children,” said Assemblyman Magnarelli.

Albany County Sheriff Craig Apple said: “I believe the safety and security of our children is paramount. We are continually looking for new ways to enhance safety in our communities, and school bus safety is no exception. These cameras will be another tool for us to use to help keep our children safe.”

Charles Dedrick, Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents said: Every superintendent feels a personal obligation to every family to put in place the necessary measures to assure the safety of their children every day. Unfortunately, the risks to students begin before they enter the school building. Students are at the greatest risk of harm during their travel to and from the school.

The issue of passing stopped school buses while they are picking up or dropping off students is a problem in every corner of the State. The legislation sponsored by Senator Young and Assemblyman Magnarelli will provide schools with a deterrent and an enforcement tool to better protect our children. NYSCOSS thanks them for their support.

This legislation would also allow police departments to better utilize their resources protecting public safety as the cameras on school buses would supplement their enforcement responsibilities.

Peter Mannella, Executive Director of the Association for Pupil Transportation said: “Our association members and all those engaged in school transportation safety are eager for enactment of this important legislation. Illegal passing is a clear and present and daily danger for the 2.3 million children who ride on yellow school buses. They trust adult motorists to obey the law and we need this legislation to help us keep the children safe when motorists don’t Stop on Red. We applaud Senator Young and Assemblyman Magnarelli for their leadership and commitment to this legislation.”