



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Bill to Help 18-20 Year-Olds Obtain Class A CDL Signed Into Law

PATTY RITCHIE December 2, 2021



A bill to encourage more young people to pursue careers in the trucking industry has been signed into law. In recent years, Senator Ritchie has been working on this issue to help address the truck driver shortage, provide relief to small businesses and ease supply chain issues.

In 2017, Senator Ritchie introduced legislation (S.8057) to establish a CDL Class A young adult licensing pilot program. Similar to her measure, through the bill recently signed into law (S.5486-A), drivers between the ages of 18 and 20 who complete a rigorous training program will be permitted to obtain their Class A CDL for intrastate operation. Currently, New York State allows 18-20 year olds to obtain a Class B CDL to drive within state lines. However, individuals are ineligible to apply for a Class A CDL until the age of 21.

With the signing of this measure into law, New York becomes the 50<sup>th</sup> state to allow individuals under the age of 21 to obtain a Class A CDL for operation within state borders.

“Truck drivers are the backbone of our state and national economies—unfortunately though, in recent years, I have heard from many local businesses who have felt the impact of the truck driver shortage,” said Senator Patty Ritchie.

“That’s what prompted me to put forth a pilot program several years ago to allow 18-20 year olds to obtain their Class A CDL. I’m pleased legislation to accomplish this has been signed into law and look forward to seeing how it provides relief to the trucking industry, small businesses and our overall supply chain.”

The new law provides for training closely mirroring the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s entry-level driver training requirements, as well as requires a minimum of 300 hours of “behind-the-wheel training” under the supervision of an experienced driver.

The American Trucking Association estimates a shortage of 80,000 truck drivers across the United States right now, up 30 percent since the start of the pandemic. In addition, due to an aging workforce, there is an urgent need for new drivers. In recent years, the industry has found it difficult to recruit them, creating issues for the state’s nearly 40,000 trucking companies—most of them small, locally owned businesses.

In the coming months, the New York State Department of Transportation will be tasked with establishing the Class A CDL young adult training program, which is expected to be up and running within the year.