

SB0968_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0968 – FAVORABLE

Education - School Bus - Fire Safety Standards

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0968, Education - School Bus - Fire Safety Standards

The [National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures](#) (NSTSP), developed by the National Congress on School Transportation (NCST) and published by [NASDPTS](#), provide recommended, voluntary standards for school bus safety, design, and operations across the US. The latest 2025 manual, updated by the 17th NCST, includes guidelines on bus inspections, electric/hybrid vehicle requirements, student safety, and emergency procedures. ¹

Maryland follows these voluntary guidelines based on current law. Instead, this law will authorize the Motor Vehicle Administration, with the advice of the Department, to mandate they adopt regulations to promote fire safety standards of school buses. This will remove the voluntary component of the law in favor of requiring we provide fire safety standards for our school bus fleets based on the most current requirements to meet this challenge.

As reported by the Brooks Learning Center: ²

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), school buses are the safest mode of transportation for getting children back and forth to school. That's mainly because school buses are designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in avoiding crashes and preventing injuries. Also, school buses keep an annual estimated 17.3 million cars off the roads surrounding schools each day. NHTSA has developed guidelines for state and local governments to use for developing policy for school buses, including fire safety and driver inspections and reporting on the condition of the fire equipment. NHTSA recommends a comprehensive program that ensures school buses are operated and maintained to achieve the highest possible level of safety. NHTSA developed Highway Safety Program Guideline Number 17, Pupil Transportation Safety, which provides states with guidance for identification, operation, and maintenance of school buses.

This bill will repeal the requirement that a school bus be constructed with certain materials that enable it to meet all the criteria of the school bus seat upholstery fire block test established by the National School Transportation specifications and procedures adopted by the most recent National Congress on School Transportation. Better standards exist and this bill will encourage their adoption as the standard for Maryland.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass SB0968.

¹ Google AI Search "national school transportation specifications and procedures"

² <https://www.brooksequipment.com/email/2015TechSeries/SeptemberTechSeries9-29-15.pdf>