

*131st Legislature*  
*Senate of*  
*Maine*  
*Senate District 2*

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**LD 2116, "An Act to Require Flame-retardant Seats on New School Buses"**

**Joint Standing Committee on Transportation**  
**February 1, 2024**

Senator Chipman, Representative Crafts and Distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation:

I am Trey Stewart; and I represent Senate District 2, which includes several municipalities in Penobscot and Aroostook Counties. I am here today to present LD 2116, "An Act to Require Flame-retardant Seats on New School Buses."

The idea for this by-request proposal was brought to me by my constituent Dawn Coffin who has worked in the school bus industry her entire career. I dare say she is quite knowledgeable and has the expertise to share her wisdom on this topic. Unfortunately, she is unable to attend today because of a previously scheduled appointment.

As Transportation Committee members, you probably are already aware that school buses are some of the safest vehicles on the road. However, when it comes to fire, this safety goes up in smoke, so to speak.

I believe you have Ms. Coffin's testimony in hand and I'm quite sure she has relayed to you that it takes 1.5 seconds for an entire bus to fill with toxic black smoke as she witnessed when a bus was burned for demonstration purposes. It's quite terrifying to think that a busload of children could be poisoned in less than two seconds.

You'll probably hear later that the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures (NSTSP) standards include flame-retardant bus seats and manufacturers are already required to follow the national school bus specifications. According to the NSTSP, all restraining barriers and passenger seats shall be constructed with materials that enable them to meet the criteria of the School Bus Seat Upholstery Fire Block Test. The standard for this test, however, is that a fire needs to self-extinguish within eight minutes of ignition. Eight minutes?? We can and should do better.

School buses are addressed in Subchapter 4 of Chapter 19 of Title 29-A. The section on school bus seating does not mention flame-retardant material nor does the section on school bus construction.

The measure before you requires school buses manufactured in 2025 or later to have seats made of flame-retardant material. Upon reflection, I would suggest to you that the proposal could be amended to say that all school buses used in Maine must be equipped with flame-retardant material. That would eliminate buses on the road that may not be equipped with the most up to date flame retardant material.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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