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Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott

NFNA LD 312

**An Act Regarding the Rates of Speed at Which School Buses
Travel**

Senator Nangle, Rep. Crafts, and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, my name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police NFNA LD 312.

Allowing school buses to travel the speed limit seems prudent. As we all know, the difference in speed between the general flow of traffic is often the cause of crashes and the greater range between the rates of speed at which vehicles have contact increases the amount of damage and the likelihood of injuries. While the current law predates my time as a police officer, I believe the overall safety and maneuverability of school buses has improved greatly in the last several decades. In 2009 the statute changed to allow school buses to travel the speed limit on highways, where prior to that the max speed was 45MPH at all times when transporting students. I have tracked school bus crashes for

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years and have not seen any evidence to indicate that greater speeds on highways have led to higher crash rates. Having said that, we do know that when crashes occur at higher speeds, the amount of damage and injuries go up as well. It is also worth considering that school buses transport our most precious cargo and because most buses do not have seatbelts it is more likely a student would be thrown away from their seats, outside the safety of the compartmental design that reduces impact.

The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation said there was "ample evidence" that requiring school buses to travel at slower speeds did not pose a safety risk to the buses or other vehicles. Also, it said, traveling at slower speeds reduces (1) potential crash severity and (2) fuel consumption. It argued that driving at higher speeds to shorten travel time "by a few minutes" may not be worth the increased risk. According to NASDPTS, this position remains current.

For these reasons, we are Neither for Nor Against LD312.

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.

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