



Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION L.D. 433 "An Act Relating to Requirements for School Bus Drivers"

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State and
Cathie Curtis, Deputy Secretary for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles,
Department of the Secretary of State

Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee, I am here to provide testimony in opposition to L.D. 433 "An Act Relating to Requirements for School Bus Drivers" and to provide you with information that may be useful to you.

The first provision of L.D. 433 is a welcome, albeit unnecessary, insert. It has the potential to clarify the Legislature's willingness to allow BMV to pursue a formal waiver to pilot an alternate, stream-lined pathway to commercial schoolbus operating license. We assess the change is unnecessary, however, given 29-A §1253 directs our Department to follow all FMCSA guidance on commercial licensing. We believe that should FMCSA authorize a pilot program or grant us a waiver, §1253 would empower us to take advantage of it.

The second provision of L.D. 433 is also unnecessary. The current pathway to a schoolbus endorsement on a CDL does not include skills testing on a combination vehicle, more commonly known as a tractor-trailer. An operator of a combination commercial vehicle requires a Class A CDL to get behind the wheel. To earn a schoolbus license today, an applicant needs only to earn a Class B CDL with passenger and schoolbus endorsements. There is no Class A requirement.

The third provision directs our Department to seek a waiver for the "under-the-hood" portion of the school bus skills test. During this portion of the practical exam, the applicant must describe to the Examiner basic features of the vehicle – to include "under the hood" – and demonstrate they understand how to assess the safety of the vehicle before beginning operation. During the pandemic, FMCSA extended an opportunity for state licensing agencies to offer applicants the opportunity to skip the under-the-hood segment of the skills test, in exchange for a license restriction that limits operation to intra-state operations only. Maine BMV accepted the waiver opportunity at the time and remains open to applying the waiver if asked.

To date, however, no applicant has asked for the exception (i.e. zero applicants). The feedback we've received from applicants and their trainers is that the requirements of Entry Level Driver Training fully prepare applicants for the under the hood inspection. The applicants arrive to the exam lot ready and able, and are not interested in a restricted license.

L.D. 433 is well-intentioned but does not fundamentally change any aspects of the current schoolbus licensing program. As a result, we recommend you vote "ought not to pass." I look forward to your questions and discussion, and we will be happy to provide any additional information at the work session upon your request.