



Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

L.D. 1714 “An Act to Create a New Pathway to Licensure to Drive School Buses”

Testimony of Shenna Bellows, Secretary of State and
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Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts, Members of the Transportation Committee, I am here to provide testimony in opposition to L.D. 1714 “An Act to Create a New Pathway to Licensure to Drive School Buses” and to provide you with information that may be useful to you.

As written, L.D. 1714 proposes a schoolbus licensure path that would not comply with existing federal guidance. The bill references an all-encompassing definition of school buses in 29-A §2301 (5), including both commercial and non-commercial varieties. Said differently, a driver of both a small 14-passenger bus and a 40-passenger bus could follow this path to licensure. That simplification adds risk to this class of license and a set of driving activities, and we should expect the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to take issue with the program.

More specifically, this pathway removes the requirement to earn a Class B CDL and Passenger bus endorsement, enroute to a school bus endorsement. Those deviations are not compliant with the federal standard for drivers who wish to operate the commercial motor vehicle variety of a school bus anywhere in the country.

Additionally, by requiring our department to certify a school bus instructor to provide the training for this pathway, this bill actually restricts existing flexible options that allow a transportation director to educate and train their employees at no cost, and without oversight from BMV’s Driver Education unit.

We share the concerns of Maine’s superintendents and transportation directors regarding availability of school bus drivers. Over the last two years, we’ve worked with the community to open multi-function school activity buses use to public schools. We’ve consulted with a handful of superintendents to makes sure they know that a 14-passenger schoolbus does not require a CDL and have engaged with transportation directors in multiple MSADs and SADs to help ensure they understand the empowerment they have to train their own staff. On average, our License Services Division are working weekly with a transportation director to find earlier testing for new schoolbus drivers.

We also acknowledge that the general intent of this bill is largely aligned with BMV’s effort to gain approval from FMCSA for a schoolbus-only pilot program. We continue to work towards a viable

proposal for that pilot program, and we strongly recommend that Maine earn prior approval for such a deviation before unilaterally deviating from FMCSA guidance.

If L.D. 1714 is adopted, we'd request an implementation date no earlier than October 1st, 2026, given the requirements and timeline of our ongoing system modernization.

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.