



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
23 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, ME 04333-0023

JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PENDER MAKIN
COMMISSIONER

February 1, 2024

Senator Chipman, Senate Chair
Representative Crafts, House Chair
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

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

LD 2116, An Act to Require Flame-retardant Seats on New School Buses, proposes to require all school buses manufactured in 2025 or later to have seats made of flame-retardant material. The Department of Education (DOE) holds the safety of its students as the highest priority of its work and is aligned with the underlying intention of the bill to keep students as safe as possible during their bus transit each day. There are, however, additional considerations from federal guidance that have implications for bill LD 2116.

The National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures have included standards for flame retardant bus seats since the 1980 revision. School bus manufacturers must conform to these specifications. Specifications include that "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" as part of the Seats and Restraining Barriers section of the Bus Body and Chassis Specifications.

Federal regulation 49 CFR 571.302 Flammability of Interior Materials requires that school bus seats must include fire block upholstery. The School Bus Seat Upholstery Fire Block Test, administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, requires that the time from ignition to flameout be eight minutes or less, and that the flame not spread to any other seats, which is reflective of the current federal regulations. The seat cover is an integral part of the impact and fire protection built into the seat. In addition, bus evacuation drills are required to prepare students in case of an emergency. All school busses in Maine meet these requirements.

The Department will be available to provide additional information on LD 2116 and respond to any questions during the upcoming work session.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:
Handwritten signature of Cheryl Brackett in black ink.

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Cheryl Brackett

Transportation Specialist
Maine Department of Education

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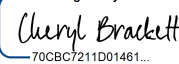
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