

Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Board Member

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION TO INSTALL BUS VIDEO CAMERAS TO ENHANCE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF STUDENTS AND BUS PERSONNEL**

**COMMITTEE: FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

**LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: SAFE, HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The distinctive yellow color and flashing lights of Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) buses are an ever-present aspect of the morning landscape throughout the streets of this county. Charged with transporting thousands of students to and from school each day, it is only natural that safety is an essential and vital element of a school bus.

When life throws at us many surprises and shocks, it always comes as a wise move to be prepared at all times by not losing grip over safety and security issues. Carelessness and inattention are probably some of the reasons behind many accidents that can be avoided. Considering installing video cameras may do their bit in not only offering security and safety to school students but also by providing support material to resolve conflicts that may arise effectively.

It is foreseeable that the high-spirited and energetic nature of children may sometimes override the safety rules of the bus. Video cameras can give bus drivers the proverbial “eyes in the back of the head,” and allow them to keep children in check while navigating the route to and from school. The well-documented evidence when produced in the form of audio and video feeds of the activities concerning a school bus journey will offer clarity about how an incident actually took place, paving the way for immediate corrective action.

Moreover, because of their valuable and precious human cargo, special set of traffic rules exists for both school bus drivers and other motorists. Motorists must stop when school buses are boarding riders or letting them off, and buses must stop completely at railroad crossings, whether the barriers are down or not. Consequences for violating these rules may be dire, and therefore fines can be steep. Video cameras pointing outside the buses may help identify motorists who illegally pass buses.

A growing number of states are attempting to hold accountable motorists who pass stopped school buses by allowing cameras to be placed on the outside of the bus to record such illegal passing. At least 22 states have school bus stop-arm camera laws.

In 2019, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee and West Virginia authorized localities or school districts to use school bus stop-arm cameras. Pennsylvania did so in 2018, and in the 2017 legislative session, Arkansas and Utah passed legislation to allow school bus stop-arm cameras. In 2016, Alabama enacted a law allowing for exterior school bus cameras, expanding a program initially created in 2015 in Mobile County. In the 2014 legislative session, South Carolina and Wyoming enacted such laws. In the 2011 and 2012 legislative sessions, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Rhode Island, Virginia and Washington enacted such measures.

It is clear that there is a great deal of interest in ensuring that school districts have the ability and the financial support to install cameras on school buses for certain purposes and to further provide the authority for county and municipalities to enforce these traffic infractions.

Additionally, according to the 2019 report from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, some 10,000 Florida bus drivers saw at least 13,640 cars zip past buses as kids tried to get on and off in one day, despite the red stop sign and flashing lights that extend from the arm of the bus. The actual number of impatient drivers could be higher.

Therefore, this agenda item seeks to authorize the Superintendent of Schools to review current research, practices, and estimated cost related to the installation of video cameras inside school buses for possible future consideration by the School Board and to include in the 2021 M-DCPS Legislative Program appropriate language to address the installation of these cameras outside school buses for certain purposes and to further provide the authority for county and municipalities to enforce these traffic infractions.

This agenda item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY  
MS. MARIA TERESA ROJAS:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to review current research, practices, and estimated cost related to the installation of video cameras inside school buses for possible future consideration by the Board; to include in the 2021 M-DCPS Legislative Program appropriate language to address the installation of video cameras outside school buses for certain purposes and to further provide the authority for county and municipalities to enforce these traffic infractions; and report back to the Board by October 13, 2020.