

Mr. Danny Espino, Vice Chair

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SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL BUS PASSING INFRACTION ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: SAFE, HEALTHY, & SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Ensuring the safety of students during their daily commute is of utmost importance for MDCPS. The Florida Legislature has passed school bus passing enforcement laws aimed at preventing tragic accidents involving school buses. These laws mandate strict penalties for motorists who illegally pass stopped school buses. To effectively enforce this crucial regulation and protect our students, it is essential to explore the installation of cameras on school buses. This proactive measure will deter reckless drivers and provide concrete evidence to support law enforcement efforts, safeguarding the well-being of our students on their journey to and from school. This year, the Florida Legislature passed Senate Bill 766 ("SB 766"): Enforcement of School Bus Passing Infractions, which became effective on July 1, 2023. SB 766 authorizes school districts to install and operate school bus infraction detection systems that meet the State Board of Education requirements.

The State of Florida's school bus passing laws dictate that when a school bus displays its stop signal and extends its stop arm, all vehicles must come to a complete stop in both directions on undivided roadways. This rule applies to motorists approaching the school bus from the front and those following it from behind. Failure to comply with this law can result in significant fines and penalties, including driver's license suspension.

Incidents of accidents caused by illegal passing of stopped school buses have been a growing concern across the nation, including Florida. These reckless actions put students' lives at risk, as they may cross the road to board or exit the bus. Despite stringent legislation, the illegal passing of school buses remains a prevalent issue, highlighting the need for proactive measures to protect our vulnerable student population.

The consequences of illegal school bus passing are severe and far-reaching. The potential for severe injury or even loss of life is evident, as students are exposed to danger while attempting to board or alight from the school bus. Beyond immediate physical harm, these incidents also create a sense of insecurity and fear among students' parents and school staff, affecting their confidence in school transportation safety. Furthermore, such incidents can increase students' stress and anxiety, impacting their overall well-being and academic performance.

To enhance the enforcement of school bus passing laws and ensure the safety of our students, this item asks that the Superintendent of Schools to explore the feasibility of installing a school bus infraction detection system as authorized by SB 766. As required by SB 766, this system would be complemented by a strong partnership with local law enforcement agencies through an Inter-Local Agreement, enabling swift review of recorded footage to identify violators, leading to expedited issuance of citations and penalties for effective deterrence. Additionally, as also required by SB 766, a comprehensive public awareness campaign would be implemented to educate motorists about the importance of obeying school bus passing laws and the potential consequences of their actions due to the District's use of a school bus infraction detection system. Finally, a process of regular evaluation and feedback from bus drivers, students, parents, and stakeholders would help identify areas for improvement and refinement in the implemented camera system and enforcement strategies.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the General Counsel's Office as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. DANNY ESPINO:**

That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. Explore the feasibility of implementing a school bus infraction detection system by installing the requisite camera system on District school buses, as authorized by SB 766. Report back to the Personnel, Student, School, and Community Support Committee on August 30th, 2023, on the feasibility and estimated cost to the District of installing such a system;
2. If it is determined that the implementation of a school bus infraction detection system is both feasible and economical, and that implementation of this system is based solely on the need to increase public safety, authorize that the Superintendent implement procurement procedures pursuant to School Board Policy 6320 and explore the seeking of all alternate and grant related funding for such a system, provided that Superintendent can satisfactory fulfill the necessary statutory requirements for implementing the program, including, but not limited to, entering into interlocal agreements with law enforcement and conducting a public awareness campaign before commencing enforcement of such a system; and
3. Develop a process of regular evaluation and feedback from bus drivers, students, parents, and stakeholders that would help identify areas for improvement and refinement in the implemented camera system and enforcement strategies.