

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs the Motorbus and Passenger Rail Service Employee Violence Prevention Act

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TRENTON – Governor Murphy today signed the Motorbus and Passenger Rail Service Employee Violence Prevention Act (S4701) to create new tools for protecting transit workers throughout the state. In addition to upgrading the penalty for all assaults on a motorbus or autobus operator, an operator's supervisor, or a rail passenger employee, the bill enables NJ TRANSIT and other carriers to suspend or prohibit from ridership individuals who commit assaults against employees and ensures NJ TRANSIT and private bus companies equip all buses and trains with communications systems to quickly contact law enforcement in an emergency.

"I cannot overstate the value of the hardworking people who ensure the safe, efficient operations of our mass transit system," **said Governor Murphy**. "It is critical that we protect New Jersey's frontline transportation workers who provide vital services to commuters across our state. These essential safeguards will promote better environments for passengers and employees."

Primary sponsors of S4701 include Senators Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr. and Robert Singer, and Assembly Members Daniel R. Benson, Yvonne Lopez, and Harold J. Wirths.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has proven that deadly viruses can spread easily and quickly on mass transit because of the limited distance between passengers. However, as NJ public train and bus operators work to continue to give riders a safe experience, they, themselves find their health at risk with unruly passengers," **said Senator Diegnan**. "Signing this legislation will take steps to ensure that NJ TRANSIT operators are physically protected from harm and exposure at the hands of unruly passengers."

"There have been too many instances where bus and train operators have been assaulted by unruly passengers," **said Senator Robert Singer**. "These violent attacks put the lives of the operator and every other passenger at risk. This new law will significantly increase the penalties for these dangerous assaults and help make our transportation systems safer."

"Transportation workers are far too often subjected to vicious attacks by irate passengers for simply doing their jobs," **said Assemblyman Benson**. "This new law will work towards preventing that violence while making it clear these attacks unacceptable. Our bus and rail employees must be protected as they fulfill their critical duties on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of commuters in our state."

"The hard-working employees on our trains and buses are invaluable to New Jersey's transportation system and deserve our respect," **said Assemblywoman Lopez**. "It is unacceptable that so many of these employees fear for their safety due to the frequency of violent attacks, which have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We must put safeguards in place to enable a safer working environment going forward."

"Since the pandemic, mass transit employees have put their lives on the line while being asked to do more than ever before. We need to do a better job of protecting our front-line mass transit workers while sending a strong message to passengers that assaults will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," **said Assemblyman Hal Wirths**. "Upgrading fines and implementing additional safety measures will go a long way toward ensuring a smoother ride for employees and law-abiding passengers alike."

S4701 requires NJ TRANSIT and motorbus companies to coordinate with law enforcement and transit police to help protect bus operators and rail employees on potentially problematic routes. The bill also requires NJ TRANSIT and motorbus companies to establish an employee assistance program for bus operators and rail employees that have been assaulted and to provide periodic de-escalation to bus operators and rail employees and to make such training available to other transportation operators in the state in order to develop best practices.

"Governor Murphy's commitment to transportation workers has been highly visible throughout his administration," **said Jerome Johnson, General President and Chairman of SMART-TD Local 60**. "I am proud to support legislation that protects the safety and well-being of the hard-working men and women who make our state run."

"The Amalgamated Transit Union commends Governor Murphy's unwavering support for our transit workers who are frontline heroes, tasked with the essential job of keeping our state moving. Today's signing of the Motorbus and Passenger Rail Service Employee Violence Prevention Act calls for increased penalties on those who attack transit workers, and will provide critical mental health assistance and support to victims of an attack," **said Ray Greaves, ATU International Vice President**. "This is undoubtedly meaningful legislation that will better protect our members and those who ride mass transit. Our thanks and appreciation to Governor Murphy for today's signing and to all those who worked so hard to make this happen."

"At NJ TRANSIT, the safety of our employees is of paramount importance and we are pleased that Governor Murphy is signing this important bill into law," **said NJ TRANSIT President & CEO Kevin S. Corbett**. "This legislation is critical to ensuring our frontline employees, many of whom I ride with on my daily commute, are protected while delivering the essential transit services our customers depend on every day."

"In New Jersey, assaults on NJ Transit workers have increased and become more violent with passengers refusing to follow the federal mask mandate on public transit," **said ATU Chairman, Orlando Riley**. Our members are the subject of that abuse, which not only endangers them, but the passengers they're responsible for. We thank Governor Murphy for recognizing the importance of this legislation to protect our members and the leadership of Assemblyman Daniel Benson, Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez, and Assemblyman Harold Wirths in getting this bill to the finish line."

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