

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

GOVERNOR MURPHY SIGNS SCHOOL BUS SAFETY LEGISLATION

12/17/2018

TRENTON - Governor Phil Murphy today signed a package of school bus safety bills into law. This series of bills raises safety standards for school buses and school bus operators in the State of New Jersey.

"After the tragic school bus accident in Paramus earlier this year, it became clearer than ever that we must act to protect our children and educators through common sense school bus safety reforms," **said Governor Murphy**. "Thanks to our actions in partnership with the Legislature, parents will be able to send their children to school knowing that school buses and school bus drivers are being held to extremely high standards designed to ensure the safety of students."

The legislation signed by Governor Murphy today enshrines in law the following requirements:

- **A4339 (Swain, Tully, Benson, Jones/Diegnan, Lagana)** requires school bus operations in the State to comply with federal regulations concerning safety, noise emissions, insurance, and drug testing, among other areas.
- **A4345 (Tully, Swain, Benson, Jones/Diegnan, Holzapfel)** requires all permanent and substitute school bus drivers and aides to undergo safety education programs twice every year.
- **S2848 (Diegnan, Lagana/Tully, Swain, Benson, Jones)** requires holders of a bus driver license to submit a medical report by a certified medical examiner. It also requires bus drivers over age 70 to submit proof of physical fitness every year, and those over age 75 to submit this proof every six months.
- **S2850 (Lagana, Diegnan/Swain, Jones, Tully, Benson)** requires that when the Department of Education notifies a board of education or a school bus contractor that a school bus driver has had their bus driver license suspended or revoked, the board of education or school bus contractor must verify to DOE that the driver in question no longer operates a bus for them.

"The May accident involving a Paramus school bus that tragically killed an East Brook Middle School student and a teacher, in addition to leaving many others injured, was a nightmare scenario," **said Senator Lagana**. "As parents, we should not have to worry about the safety of our children when they are on a school bus. This horrific accident prompted me to call for legislative hearings which raised questions about how we can make school buses safer, write tougher regulations relating to bus drivers and bus operators and how we monitor our children once they board a bus. This package of bills addresses these concerns and should ensure that no parent or child will have to go through what too many have endured these past few months."

"This will help ensure that the school bus accidents like the ones we have seen over the past few months never happen again," **said Senator Diegnan**. "The package of bills focuses on school bus operations and drivers to be required to comply with both state and federal regulations. We want school bus drivers to be knowledgeable of how to handle a bus and know what the procedures are in the event an accident occurs. These new changes will go a long way in making sure we improve school bus safety for our children."

"After witnessing so many tragic accidents in recent years, it's imperative that we advance meaningful improvements to school bus safety, including better training for drivers and aides," **said Senator James Holzapfel**. "Every parent deserves to know that their child is safe when they get on a school bus. That's exactly the intent of this comprehensive package of bills signed by the governor today."

“This terrible tragedy for our community occurred a week before Assemblyman Tully and I were sworn in, and we have made school bus safety our top priority because no parent should ever fear for their child when dropping them off at school,” **said Assemblywoman Lisa Swain**. “These bills addressed major concerns discussed since May and should help parents and students feel safer about riding the school bus. I want to thank Governor Murphy for being one of our strongest allies on this issue and ensuring student safety is front and center.”

“Seeing firsthand the way this tragedy affected the Paramus community, Assemblywoman Swain and I made it our priority to push through the necessary reforms as quickly as possible,” **said Assemblyman Chris Tully**. “These crucial pieces of legislation ensure that drivers and aides have proper annual safety training, regular medical screenings to ensure physical fitness, and that unsafe bus drivers are immediately taken off the road to protect our children. I am thankful to my colleagues in the legislature and to Governor Murphy for joining us in taking critical action to protect our students.”

“Having these safeguards in place will protect our students riding on school buses,” **said Assemblyman Dan Benson**. “Safety is and must always be a priority when transporting our students to and from school. Each of these bills aims to strengthen transportation policy and state law to ensure safety is remains paramount in school districts across the state.”

“Families deserve our full attention to the questions raised after the Paramus incident,” **said Assemblywoman Patricia Egan Jones**. “Aligning state law with federal law and requiring certain medical screenings for drivers are two important steps toward ensuring stronger protections for student passengers.”

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