



February 1, 2023

Westchester County Executive
Westchester County Legislators

Via email

Dear County Executive George Latimer and Westchester County Legislators,

Drivers illegally pass stopped school buses hundreds of times a day in Westchester County, putting children at risk as they travel to and from school. Our districts urge the County to adopt a program allowing school districts to implement school bus stop-arm photo enforcement programs. This critical public safety tool will make our streets safer and hold accountable motorists who put our children's lives at risk.

Westchester is the only county in our state's New York City region that has not yet authorized a school bus safety program. Neighboring counties, including Rockland, Dutchess, Putnam, as well as Suffolk County, and several municipalities in Nassau County on Long Island, have all passed local laws and approved full fleet, no-cost bus safety programs. These programs are proven to dramatically curb dangerous driving around school buses and come at no cost through a violator-funded program.

Since the pandemic, our communities have seen an increase in dangerous driving around school buses. Recent reports from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) show that illegally passing school buses is at an "epidemic level," with more than 41.8 million violations each year nationwide. This year, pilot programs in Somers Central School District and Hendrick Hudson School District captured more than 640 incidents of illegal passings during this back-to-school period alone. The video evidence of these violations is jarring. Every instance that goes unenforced endangers the life of a child in our communities.

Without photo enforcement technology, most of these violations go unenforced, which further encourages dangerous driving. One tragedy is too many, and there have already been too many incidents and close calls this year alone. We need Westchester County to enable the efficient enforcement of our traffic laws to make our roads safer for our kids.

These programs are supported by a broad coalition of parents, school officials, transportation safety advocates, and law enforcement. Moreover, it is not a mandate – it simply gives school districts the opportunity to implement school bus stop-arm photo enforcement programs if they so choose. As always, WPSBA and the public school districts of Westchester County are happy to work with the County to ensure that any potential logistical or privacy issues are ironed out prior to instituting the proposed school bus safety program.

For all these reasons, Westchester Putnam School Boards Association urges Westchester County to pass this important legislation to enhance public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Belanger".

Karen Belanger
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Levy".

Scott Levy
President