

2310

2015-2016 Regular Sessions

I N   A S S E M B L Y

January 15, 2015

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Introduced by M. of A. PRETLOW -- read once and referred to the Committee on Transportation

AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law and the education law, in relation to requiring the usage of seat safety belts on school buses

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

1     Section 1. Paragraph (a) of subdivision 4 of section 1229-c of the  
2     vehicle and traffic law, as separately amended by chapters 232 and 509  
3     of the laws of 2004, is amended to read as follows:  
4     (a) "motor vehicle" shall include all motor vehicles which are  
5     required by section three hundred eighty-three of this chapter or regulation or would be required if such motor vehicle were registered in New  
6     York state to be equipped [by a safety belt but shall not include] WITH  
7     SEAT BELTS, INCLUDING those vehicles which are used as school buses, as  
8     such term is defined in section one hundred forty-two of this chapter  
9     [and]; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, THAT THE TERM "MOTOR VEHICLE" SHALL NOT  
10    INCLUDE those vehicles which are authorized emergency vehicles, as such  
11    term is defined in section one hundred one of this chapter;  
12    S   2. Subdivision 11 of section 1229-c of the vehicle and traffic law,  
13    as added by chapter 653 of the laws of 1989 and as renumbered by chapter  
14    104 of the laws of 1991, is amended and a new subdivision 11-a is added  
15    to read as follows:  
16    11. [Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision four of this  
17    section, no] NO person shall operate a school bus unless SUCH PERSON IS  
18    REASONABLY SURE THAT all passengers under the age of four are restrained  
19    in a specially designed detachable or removable seat as required by  
20    subdivision one of this section, or another restraining device approved  
21    by the commissioner.  
22    11-A. NO PERSON SHALL OPERATE A SCHOOL BUS EQUIPPED WITH SEAT SAFETY  
23    BELTS PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION FIVE OF SECTION THREE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE  
24    OF THIS CHAPTER OR PURSUANT TO SECTION THIRTY-SIX HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE-A  
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EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets  
[ ] is old law to be omitted.

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1 OF THE EDUCATION LAW UNLESS SUCH PERSON IS REASONABLY SURE THAT ALL  
2 PASSENGERS ARE RESTRAINED BY A SEAT SAFETY BELT. FOR THE PURPOSES OF  
3 THIS SUBDIVISION, THE TERM "PASSENGER" SHALL NOT INCLUDE SCHOOL BUS  
4 ATTENDANTS, AS THAT TERM IS DEFINED IN SECTION TWELVE HUNDRED  
5 TWENTY-NINE-D OF THIS ARTICLE, OR ANY OTHER PERSON ACTING IN A SUPERVI-  
6 SORY CAPACITY. FURTHERMORE, IN ANY ACTION FOR PERSONAL INJURIES BY A  
7 PASSENGER ON A SCHOOL BUS, THE PROVISIONS OF SUBDIVISION FOUR OF SECTION  
8 THIRTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THIRTEEN OF THE EDUCATION LAW SHALL APPLY.

9 S 3. Subdivision 1 of section 3623 of the education law, as amended by  
10 chapter 474 of the laws of 1996, is amended to read as follows:

11 1. a. NO PERSON SHALL OPERATE A SCHOOL BUS EQUIPPED WITH SEAT SAFETY  
12 BELTS PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION FIVE OF SECTION THREE HUNDRED EIGHTY-THREE  
13 OF THE VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC LAW OR PURSUANT TO SECTION THIRTY-SIX HUNDRED  
14 THIRTY-FIVE-A OF THIS ARTICLE UNLESS SUCH PERSON IS REASONABLY SURE THAT  
15 ALL PASSENGERS ARE RESTRAINED BY A SEAT SAFETY BELT. FOR THE PURPOSES OF  
16 THIS SUBDIVISION, THE TERM "PASSENGER" SHALL NOT INCLUDE SCHOOL BUS  
17 ATTENDANTS, AS THAT TERM IS DEFINED IN SECTION TWELVE HUNDRED  
18 TWENTY-NINE-D OF THE VEHICLE AND TRAFFIC LAW, OR ANY OTHER PERSON ACTING  
19 IN A SUPERVISORY CAPACITY. FURTHERMORE, IN ANY ACTION FOR PERSONAL INJU-  
20 RIES BY A PASSENGER ON A SCHOOL BUS, THE PROVISIONS OF SUBDIVISION FOUR  
21 OF SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT HUNDRED THIRTEEN OF THIS CHAPTER SHALL APPLY.

22 B. THE DRIVER OF A SCHOOL BUS SHALL BE REQUIRED TO ANNOUNCE TO THE  
23 PASSENGERS OF SUCH BUS: "EVERYBODY FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELT", BEFORE SUCH  
24 BUS IS PLACED IN MOTION.

25 C. NO PERSON SHALL OPERATE A SCHOOL BUS WHILE ANY PASSENGER IS STAND-  
26 ING, EITHER IN THE AISLE OR AT THEIR SEAT.

27 D. The commissioner of transportation in consultation with the commis-  
28 sioner shall adopt, promulgate and enforce rules, standards and specifi-  
29 cations regulating and controlling the efficiency and equipment of  
30 school buses used to transport pupils, with particular regard to the  
31 safety and convenience of such pupils and the suitability and adaptabil-  
32 ity of such school buses to the requirements of the school district. No  
33 school bus shall be purchased by a school district or used for the  
34 transportation of pupils unless and until it has been approved by the  
35 commissioner of transportation as complying with the rules, standards  
36 and specifications relating thereto.

37 [b.] E. No bus manufactured after January first, nineteen hundred  
38 seventy-four shall be used to transport pupils under any contract with a  
39 school district or board of cooperative educational services unless it  
40 has been similarly approved by the commissioner of transportation,  
41 except that no such approval shall be required for buses used to trans-  
42 port pupils and also used to serve the general public under a certif-  
43 icate of public convenience for the operation of a bus line, granted  
44 pursuant to the transportation law or for buses used to transport  
45 pupils, teachers and other persons acting in a supervisory capacity to  
46 and from school activities and which bus does not receive or discharge  
47 passengers on or along the public highways on regularly scheduled routes  
48 and is operating under a permit as a contract carrier of passengers  
49 granted pursuant to the transportation law or by the interstate commerce  
50 commission. School buses manufactured or assembled prior to April  
51 first, nineteen hundred seventy-seven may not be used to transport  
52 pupils, teachers and other persons acting in a supervisory capacity to  
53 and from school activities.

54 [c.] F. The commissioner shall PROVIDE FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF PARA-  
55 GRAPH A OF THIS SUBDIVISION AND SHALL establish and provide for the  
56 enforcement of rules and regulations requiring instruction on the use of

1 seat safety belts [as specified in subdivision five of section three  
2 hundred eighty-three of the vehicle and traffic law and section thirty-  
3 six hundred thirty-five-a of this chapter], INSTRUCTION ON THE DANGERS  
4 OF STANDING WHILE THE BUS IS IN MOTION, drills in safe boarding and  
5 exiting procedures and emergency drills to be conducted on all school  
6 buses and shall emphasize specific hazards encountered by children  
7 during snow, ice, rain and other inclement weather. All such drills  
8 shall include instruction in the importance of orderly conduct by all  
9 school bus passengers. A minimum of [three] FOUR such drills shall be  
10 had on each school bus during the school year, the first to be conducted  
11 during the first seven days of session of the fall term.

12 S 4. Section 3635-a of the education law, as added by chapter 747 of  
13 the laws of 1986, subdivision 1 as amended by chapter 474 of the laws of  
14 1996, is amended to read as follows:

15 S 3635-a. Safety belt usage. 1. A board of education or board of  
16 trustees may, in its discretion, following a public hearing for the  
17 purpose of determining whether a resolution shall be adopted, provide  
18 for the [use] INSTALLATION of seat safety belts on such school buses, in  
19 accordance with regulations and standards established by the commission-  
20 er under subdivision one of section thirty-six hundred [thirty-eight]  
21 TWENTY-THREE of this [chapter] ARTICLE.

22 2. Such public hearing, conducted upon reasonable notice, shall be  
23 held to consider: (a) whether the district shall install seat safety  
24 belts on buses purchased and/or contracted for prior to the effective  
25 date of this section [and require their use]; AND (b) when such instal-  
26 lation shall be provided[, and (c) whether use of seat safety belts  
27 shall be required on all school buses within the district so equipped  
28 after a date to be determined by the board of education or board of  
29 trustees].

30 3. Such hearings shall consider the effect of seat safety belts  
31 installation on the total number of students that can be transported on  
32 such buses.

33 4. Within twenty days after the public hearing, the board of education  
34 or board of trustees shall, by resolution, determine whether to require  
35 installation [and use] of seat safety belts on some or all school buses.

36 4-A. IF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OR BOARD OF TRUSTEES HAS DETERMINED TO  
37 REQUIRE THE INSTALLATION OF SEAT SAFETY BELTS, THE USE OF SUCH BELTS  
38 SHALL BE MANDATORY PURSUANT TO PARAGRAPH A OF SUBDIVISION ONE OF SECTION  
39 THIRTY-SIX HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE OF THIS ARTICLE AND PURSUANT TO SUBDIVI-  
40 SION ELEVEN-A OF SECTION TWELVE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE-C OF THE VEHICLE AND  
41 TRAFFIC LAW.

42 5. This section shall apply only to vehicles owned or leased by school  
43 districts and nonpublic schools, and to vehicles used to perform  
44 contracts with such school districts and nonpublic schools for the  
45 purpose of transporting school children for hire.

46 6. Nothing in this section shall be construed to impose a duty upon  
47 boards of education or boards of trustees to provide seat safety belts  
48 on school buses purchased or contracted for prior to the effective date  
49 of this section, nor shall any board of education or board of trustees  
50 be held liable for failure to provide seat safety belts pursuant to this  
51 section. A school board member or trustee shall have immunity from any  
52 civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed  
53 as a result of the provisions of this section provided that such person  
54 shall have acted in good faith. For the purpose of any proceeding, civil  
55 or criminal, the good faith of any such person shall be presumed.

1 7. The provisions of this section shall not apply to school districts  
2 which are using safety belts on school buses or have installed or have  
3 contracted for the installation of seat safety belts prior to the effective  
4 date of this section.

5 S 5. Subdivision 1 of section 1229-d of the vehicle and traffic law,  
6 as added by chapter 675 of the laws of 1985, is amended to read as  
7 follows:

8 (1) (A) "School bus attendant" shall mean a person, INCLUDING A SCHOOL  
9 AID OR MONITOR, employed or authorized by a school district OR EMPLOYED  
10 BY A MOTOR CARRIER UNDER CONTRACT TO A SCHOOL DISTRICT to ride on a  
11 school bus as defined in paragraph (a) of subdivision one of section  
12 five hundred nine-a of this chapter for the purpose of maintaining order  
13 or rendering assistance to pupils with special needs.

14 (B) ANY PUPIL WITH SPECIAL NEEDS WHO IS UNABLE TO UTILIZE A SEAT SAFETY  
15 BELT, AS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SUBDIVISION ELEVEN-A OF SECTION TWELVE  
16 HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE-C OF THIS ARTICLE AND SUBDIVISION ONE OF SECTION  
17 THIRTY-SIX HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE OF THE EDUCATION LAW, SHALL BE ASSIGNED  
18 A SCHOOL BUS ATTENDANT.

19 S 6. Subdivision 4 of section 3813 of the education law, as added by  
20 chapter 747 of the laws of 1986, is amended to read as follows:

21 4. In any action for personal injuries by a passenger on a school bus  
22 against a school district, school bus operator under contract with a  
23 school district, or any agent or employee of a district or operator  
24 (including, but not limited to, bus drivers, matrons, teachers serving  
25 as chaperones and volunteers) no such person shall be held liable solely  
26 because the injured party was not wearing a seat safety belt OR HELD  
27 LIABLE SOLELY BECAUSE THE INJURED PARTY WAS INJURED AS THE RESULT OF  
28 WEARING A SEAT SAFETY BELT; provided, however, that nothing contained  
29 herein shall be construed to grant immunity from liability for failure  
30 to:

31 (a) maintain in operating order any equipment required by statute,  
32 rule or regulation;

33 (b) comply with applicable statutes, rules or regulations.

34 S 7. This act shall take effect on the first of September next  
35 succeeding the date on which it shall have become a law. Provided, that  
36 any rules and regulations necessary for the timely implementation of  
37 this act on its effective date shall be promulgated before such date.