STATE OF NEW YORK

8660

IN SENATE

January 7, 2026

Introduced by Sen. STEC -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Transportation

AN ACT to amend the vehicle and traffic law and the transportation law, in relation to establishing mandatory safety belt use, pre-trip safety briefings, and regular safety belt inspections for commercial passenger vehicles

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "comprehensive passenger safety enhancement act".

§ 2. Legislative purpose. The legislature finds that enhanced safety measures for passengers in commercially operated vehicles are essential to reduce injuries and fatalities. In alignment with recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) following the fatal 2023 bus and truck collision in Louisville, NY, this act aims to improve passenger safety by mandating seat belt use, conducting pre-trip safety briefings, requiring regular inspections, and enforcing stricter compliance measures.

§ 3. Section 1229-c of the vehicle and traffic law is amended by adding a new subdivision 3-e to read as follows:

3-e. (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision three-d of this section, no person shall operate a commercial vehicle in this state unless:

(i) such person is restrained by a safety belt approved by the commissioner, and all passengers are restrained by a safety belt approved by the commissioner;

(ii) such person conducts regular inspections of all safety belts in such commercial vehicle to ensure the functionality, accessibility, and proper maintenance of such safety belts. Such person shall maintain records of all safety belt inspections conducted pursuant to this subparagraph and make such records available for review by the department and the department of transportation;

(iii) such person, prior to operating such commercial vehicle, conducts safety briefings to inform passengers of the importance of

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD09604-01-5

wearing safety belts, proper use of safety belts, and risks associated with not wearing safety belts.

(b) No person shall be a passenger in a commercial vehicle unless such passenger is restrained by a safety belt approved by the commissioner.

§ 4. Paragraphs (d) and (e) of subdivision 4 of section 1229-c of the vehicle and traffic law, as added by chapter 434 of the laws of 2024, are amended and two new subdivisions (f) and (g) are added to read as follows:

(d) "charter bus" shall mean a bus manufactured or assembled on or after November twenty-eighth, two thousand sixteen transporting passengers for compensation in a chartered party; [~~and~~]

(e) "chartered party" shall mean a group of persons who, pursuant to a common purpose and under a single contract and at a fixed charge, have acquired exclusive use of a bus to travel together as a group to a specific destination or for a particular itinerary either agreed upon in advance or modified after having left the place of origin by such group[~~.~~];

(f) "commercial vehicle" shall mean any vehicle used to transport more than eight passengers, including the driver, whether or not for compensation, and shall include charter buses; and

(g) "safety belt" shall mean any restraint system designed to secure an occupant of a vehicle and reduce the risk of injury to such occupant in the event of a collision.

§ 5. Subdivisions 5 and 9 of section 1229-c of the vehicle and traffic law, as amended by chapter 434 of the laws of 2024, is amended to read as follows:

5. Any person who violates the provisions of subdivision three, three-c, three-d, three-e or ten-a of this section shall be punished by a civil fine of up to fifty dollars. Any person who violates the provisions of subdivision one, two, eleven or thirteen of this section shall be punished by a civil fine of not less than twenty-five nor more than one hundred dollars. In any prosecution or proceeding alleging a violation of paragraph (b) of subdivision one or paragraph (c) of subdivision two of this section, it shall be an affirmative defense that the passenger subject to the requirements of such paragraphs was restrained by a safety belt and measures more than four feet nine inches in height and/or weighs more than one hundred pounds. In any prosecution or proceeding alleging a violation of paragraph (b) or paragraph (c) of subdivision three-c of this section, it shall be an affirmative defense that such taxi or livery was in violation of subdivision four-b of section three hundred eighty-three of this chapter. In any prosecution or proceeding alleging a violation of subdivision three-d of this section, it shall be an affirmative defense that such charter bus was not equipped with seat belts, or such seat belts were not clearly visible, accessible, or maintained in good working order.

9. Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision four of this section, (a) the provisions of this section shall not apply to buses other than school buses, except as otherwise provided in [~~subdivision~~] subdivisions three-d and three-e of this section and except that the provisions of subdivision three-a of this section shall be applicable to any person operating a charter bus and to charter bus passengers age eight or older, and (b) the provisions of subdivisions one, two, three and three-a of this section shall not apply to taxis and liveries except that the provisions of subdivision three-a of this section shall be applicable to any person operating a taxi or livery and to taxi and livery passengers age eight or older.

§ 6. Section 14 of the transportation law is amended by adding a new subdivision 37 to read as follows:

37. To develop and distribute, in collaboration with transportation unions and associations, educational materials to promote seat belt use and safe seat belt practices.

§ 7. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after it shall have become a law; provided, however, that if chapter 434 of the laws of 2024 shall not have taken effect on or before such date then sections four and five of this act shall take effect on the same date and in the same manner as such chapter of the laws of 2024, takes effect. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.