

JACKIE WALORSKI
2ND DISTRICT, INDIANA

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WORKER
AND FAMILY SUPPORT
RANKING MEMBER

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

419 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3915

202 LINCOLNWAY EAST
SUITE 101
MISHAWAKA, IN 46544
(574) 204-2645

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1402

September 17, 2020

James C. Owens
Deputy Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Deputy Administrator Owens:

I am writing to applaud the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) notice and request for comment regarding two announced studies, one to assess driver knowledge about state laws governing school bus passing, and the other to survey the effectiveness of school bus camera enforcement along with public education to prevent illegal passing.

Illegal passing of stopped school buses threatens students' lives, but it remains all too common. In 2018, school bus drivers in 38 states reported 83,944 vehicles illegally passed their buses in one day. I have seen firsthand in my district the tragic consequences of illegally passing a school bus. On October 30, 2018, an illegal passing near Rochester, Indiana, claimed the lives of three siblings and seriously injured another child. Although the bus driver followed all safety procedures and tried to keep the students from crossing the road upon seeing the approaching vehicle, the driver of the vehicle failed to recognize the signs of a stopped school bus, failed to stop, and hit the four students as they crossed the road.

In response to this tragedy, I introduced H.R. 2218, the Stop for School Buses Act, which would examine school bus passing laws in all states, issue recommendations on best practices for preventing illegal passing, evaluate the effectiveness of various technologies that may prevent illegal passing incidents, and review driver education materials in all states to determine whether more information about illegal passing should be provided to drivers. It would also create a public safety messaging campaign to promote safe driving when children are present and highlight the dangers of illegal passing.

I want to applaud the NHTSA for proactively taking the steps called for in H.R. 2218 to reduce illegal school bus passing and increase public knowledge about the dangers of illegally passing a school bus in order to prevent another tragedy like we saw in Rochester. These important studies will help provide local school districts and states with more information to help them develop policies that keep children safe as they travel to and from school. I look forward to learning more about the results of these two studies, and I am willing to be a resource if I can be helpful in any way.

Sincerely,



Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress