

# HAVEN'S LAW INCREASES PENALTIES FOR PASSING A STOPPED SCHOOL BUS IN WEST VIRGINIA

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CHARLESTON, WV--Senator Stephen Baldwin (D- Greenbrier) introduced Senate Bill 238 this year, a bill that doubles fines for motorists passing stopped school buses.

"After an incident in Indiana this fall involving the death of three children exiting a school bus, local drivers approached me," said Baldwin. "They said people pass their stopped buses every day, endangering kids. They said we're lucky more children aren't injured or killed, and we must do something about it. Today, we are doing something about it."

Yesterday, the Senate passed S.B. 238 unanimously.

"If drivers don't take children's safety seriously, they will face serious consequences. These are among the stiffest penalties in the nation not only in terms of fines but also license forfeiture," said Baldwin. The bill raises first-time offense penalties to a fine of \$500-\$1,000 (from \$250) and license suspension for 60 days; second offense penalties to a \$1,000-1,500 fine and license suspension for 180 days; and three or more violations would now carry a penalty of a \$2,000 fine, at least 48 hours' jail time, and loss of license for one year.

These penalties may seem tough, said Baldwin, but they need to be tough—children are dying because of negligent and impatient drivers. "We call this 'Haven's Law,' in honor of Haven McCarthy,



who died getting off a school bus in Lincoln County in 2007. We owe it to children and their families to keep our little ones safe."

"Bus drivers have a tough job," said Baldwin. "From dealing with mountainous terrain to weather to maintaining order on the bus, they do it all. But they can't take care of kids and catch offenders who pass their stopped buses at the same time." To aid drivers in reporting violations to law enforcement, the bill provides that all new buses will be equipped with front and rear-facing cameras. The cameras will be paid for by the WV Department of Education using federal funding.

The bill has been received by the House of Delegates and referred to the House Judiciary Committee.