



City of Everett
Office of the Mayor
Carlo DeMaria, Jr.
484 Broadway
EVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS 02149

PRESS RELEASE

Monday, October 9, 2017

MAYOR DEMARIA WORKS WITH EVERETT DELEGATION TO REQUIRE SEATBELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES

The DeMaria administration recently testified before the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security in support of an act relative to seatbelts on school buses filed by State Representative Joseph W. McGonagle.

Mayor DeMaria said, “I want to thank Representative McGonagle for his outstanding efforts on behalf of the City of Everett. This legislation will promote the safety of over 7,000 students in Everett, and also the hundreds of thousands of students in districts across the Commonwealth.”

In 2015, the NHTSA updated its policy regarding seatbelts on school buses, saying that every child on every school bus should have a three-point seat belt.

Seatbelts have been required in cars since 1968 and are required on smaller school buses. However, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration allows individual states to make decisions on requiring seatbelts on larger school buses. Currently, six states require school buses to be equipped with seatbelts, including California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.

Mayor DeMaria also stated, “This local option would allow cities the opportunity to move quickly if the issue is an urgent priority within the community. I respectfully urge the committee to issue this legislation a favorable report.”

Below is the Mayor’s letter of testimony:

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Naughton, and Distinguished Committee Members,

*As mayor of the City of Everett, I respectfully urge you to act favorably upon **H. 1289, An Act Relative to Seatbelts on School Buses**, filed by Everett Representative Joseph McGonagle. This common-sense measure would promote the safety of over 7,000 students in Everett, and also the hundreds of thousands of students in districts across the Commonwealth. This measure is critically important to me as a mayor, as a father of three school-aged children, and simply as a concerned member of the community.*

I became aware of the fact that the Department of Public Utilities, which regulates other components of school buses, does not have the statutory authority to mandate seatbelts on them during a meeting with the DPU on an unrelated matter last year. I then worked with Representative McGonagle, Senator DiDomenico, and the Massachusetts Municipal Association to draft and file this legislation, and I want to thank them sincerely for their work and collaboration.

The proposed legislation would require every school bus transporting students to or from school to be equipped with a seatbelt for each permanent seating accommodation, to be designed and installed in compliance with United States Department of Transportation motor vehicle safety standards. The bill would apply to public, private, vocational and parochial schools. The legislation would go into effect in 2022, which will provide communities time to phase in seatbelts by requiring them as part of their school bus contracts, rather than having to implement expensive retrofits.

While seatbelts have been required in cars since 1968 and are required on smaller school buses, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration allows individual states to make decisions on requiring seatbelts on larger school buses. Currently, six states require school buses to be equipped with seatbelts, including California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, and Texas.

In 2015, the NHTSA updated its policy regarding seatbelts on school buses, saying that every child on every school bus should have a three-point seat belt.

Further, the National Transportation Safety Board, the federal agency charged by Congress with investigating transportation accidents and issuing safety recommendations, has found that in several serious school bus accidents, the use of seatbelts mitigated serious injury.

While there have not been any empirical studies on the effectiveness of the school bus seatbelt laws in the six states that have mandated their installation and use (to my knowledge), we can however look to Australia, where school bus seatbelts have been mandatory since 1994. A study of the first 10 years of their law found that in instances of serious school bus accidents, no student wearing a seatbelt suffered a fatality or disabling injury.

I understand that a number of other bills before the committee would also require seatbelts on school buses, and I am supportive of all of the proposed legislation that shares the goal of improving safety for schoolchildren. H. 1289, however, differs from the other pieces of legislation in that it enables a city or town to enact a local ordinance or bylaw to require that school buses operating within the municipality must be equipped with seatbelts at an earlier implementation date than 2022. This local option would allow cities the opportunity to move quickly if the issue is an urgent priority within the community.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to offer testimony on this important public safety issue for our children, and for your consideration. I respectfully urge the committee to issue this legislation a favorable report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Catherine Rollins Denisi, Deputy Chief of Staff, at 617-394-2270.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carlo De Maria". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Carlo DeMaria
Mayor*

###

For additional press information please contact:

Tom Philbin
Communications Director
City of Everett
484 Broadway
Everett, MA 02149
617-394-2270
tom.philbin@ci.everett.ma.us