



House Bill 196

Motor Vehicles-School Buses-Seat Belts

Position: UNF

Date: **February 27, 2024**

To: **Environment and
Transportation,
Ways and Means**

The Caroline County Commissioners **OPPOSE** HB 196. This bill would require the installation of seat belts on all county school buses. While the Commissioners understand the importance of ensuring the safety of students during transportation, the provisions outlined in this bill present several concerns that warrant careful consideration.

The mandate for seat belts on school buses imposes a significant financial burden on school districts already grappling with budgetary constraints. The costs associated with retrofitting buses with seat belts, as well as ongoing maintenance and inspection requirements, could divert essential funds away from other educational priorities. The effectiveness of seat belts in improving safety on school buses is a matter of ongoing debate among transportation experts. Studies have shown that the compartmentalization design of school bus seats provides a high level of protection in the event of a crash, and the addition of seat belts may not necessarily result in a significant reduction in injuries or fatalities.

Lastly, the implementation of seat belts on school buses raises logistical challenges, particularly concerning younger students who may require assistance with buckling and unbuckling their seat belts. This could potentially create delays in boarding and disembarking buses, leading to disruptions in the daily transportation schedule.

The Commissioners urge a reconsideration regarding provisions of HB 196 and explore alternative measures to enhance school bus safety that are both effective and cost-efficient. Collaborative efforts between lawmakers, transportation officials, and other stakeholders are essential to ensuring the well-being of our students without unduly burdening school districts and taxpayers.

For these reasons, the Commissioners urge an unfavorable report on HB 196.

Sincerely,

J. Travis Breeding, President