NSTA President, John Benish, Jr., Testifies about School Bus Safety to House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

Washington, D.C. – On July 25, 2019, National School Transportation Association (NSTA) President, John Benish, Jr., who is also President and Chief Operating Officer of Cook-Illinois Corporation, provided expert witness testimony about school bus safety to the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, at their hearing entitled, "Examining the Federal Role in Improving School Bus Safety".

NSTA explained that school buses have unique design and safety features as well as dedicated and specially trained drivers, resulting in an unmatched safety record. In fact, only .01% of all annual vehicle fatalities occur inside a school bus. Mr. Benish explained that the area around the bus, during loading and unloading, is where the majority of student injuries occur. While passing a stopped school bus is illegal in all 50 states, violations have reached epidemic proportions. Mr. Benish noted that the 2018 one day survey of 105,306 school bus drivers in 38 states revealed 83,944 incidents of vehicles illegally passing stopped school buses in ONE day, and asked for support of the bipartisan bill, the STOP for School Buses Act (STOP Act) (HR2218/S1254), which addresses the issue of illegal passing of school buses.

Mr. Benish also addressed the Secure Every Child Under the Right Equipment Standards Act (SECURES Act - HR2792) introduced in May seeking to federally mandate seat belts on school buses. He noted that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has previously declined to mandate seat belts on large school buses at the federal level because it would force more children into more unsafe modes of transportation as communities are compelled to make difficult budget decisions. NSTA also believes this issue is most appropriately decided at the State and local level where school budgets are resolved and does not support a federal mandate unless accompanied by full funding that is equally available to both public and private providers of school transportation. He also explained that lap shoulder belts are the only appropriate consideration and added that NSTA does not support any requirement to retrofit as it could compromise structural integrity of the school bus.

A complete copy of the testimony provided by NSTA President, John Benish, can be found here.

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