



Protecting NC School Children from Careless Drivers

Every day thousands of drivers in North Carolina speed past stopped school buses, putting children at risk. In a one-day survey at the beginning of the 2014 school year, NC school bus drivers reported 3,153 vehicles passing stopped school buses, more than double the violations reported in 2000.

In recent weeks, NC children boarding or waiting for school buses have been injured and even killed by careless drivers. These tragedies are preventable. As you know from past work on this issue, parents, school officials and law enforcement work to protect children and hold violators accountable, but the sheer number of buses makes it impractical for law enforcement to catch every violator. We can and should do more to protect children by using technology to the fullest extent.

States around the country are using state-of-the-art technology to catch violators who pass stopped school buses. Systems in Virginia and Georgia deploy stop-arm cameras mounted on school buses to detect illegally passing vehicles, photograph the license plates, and issue automatic citations to vehicle owners. The systems pay for themselves using fines collected from violators, similar to the way red light photo enforcement works.

Utilizing this civil citation method would improve student safety and enforcement while minimizing the work load on school districts, law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

It's working. These states have seen fewer drivers speeding past stopped school buses thanks to the swift, automatic action following each violation. For example, a large, urban county in Georgia issued 1,302 citations in its first month. But by the sixth month, citations dropped to 375 per month, a 71 percent decrease.

In North Carolina, legislation is needed to give local school boards authority to implement a photo enforcement civil citation system for violators who illegally pass stopped school buses. We respectfully request that the NC Child Fatality Task Force actively support this plan to improve safety for students who ride school buses and to deter potentially deadly violations.