

Submitter: Sarah Mazze
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB3014

Thank you Chair, Vice Chair and members of the committee,

I am drawing my testimony from my experience as the Eugene School District 4J Safe Routes To School Coordinator in support of HB 3014, but am not writing this on behalf of my employer.

Since I have been working at 4J, the Transportation Department has been struggling to get bus drivers. The pandemic only made it worse and the district has not recovered in terms of driver staffing. Often times when I am out at schools, I'll see the Transportation IT staff or even the Transportation Director driving a school bus. Unfortunately, we are not alone in this shortage.

The impacts on students across the state are many. Routes are sometimes late, impacting students' school experience and home life. Bus stops are more crowded because removing stops allows for a shorter more efficient trip, and at those crowded, unsupervised stops there can be troubles with conflict between students and even their parents or guardians. Some districts have even had to cancel bus routes on the day of school. The students hurt the most are those who don't have any other way of getting to school.

Meanwhile, some of those students receiving bus service live close enough to school that they could walk or bike, but they don't because the infrastructure is unsafe. There is not a funding source for crossing guards, nor for fixing all of the infrastructure problems surrounding our schools.

The great news is that there is a solution to this problem, or at least a means of easing the challenge of getting all students to school safely every day. Crossing guards, walking school, buses, and bike trains can move students through and across formally identified hazards on their way to school and can step in when it makes sense in other cases as well.

There are schools where students are getting school bus transportation even though they live across from the school because the street has been deemed hazardous to cross. Clearly, stationing a crossing guard there before and after school would be a much more efficient use of taxpayer dollars than bussing students and could provide additional hours for existing school staff who are already at the school and do not have a full day of work, such as educational assistants. While this is an extreme example, there are multiple situations in our district alone where a little adult

assistance could go a long way, and could help students use active transportation to get to school safely.

For those districts who choose to use the flexibility that HB3014 provides for walking school buses, bike trains and crossing guards, students would have added benefits increased physical activity, which we know sets them up for improved physical and mental health as well as academic success. Moreover, shortening routes by removing those stops closest to the school by adding a crossing guard or a walking group could allow the buses to arrive on time and lead to better academic success for all students.

Thank you for considering this piece of legislation, and I urge you to vote yes on HB3014.