

Submitter: Jack Blashchishen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Education
Measure: HB3014

Good afternoon Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Wright and Hudson, and members of the Committee.

My name is Jack Blashchishen and I am known by students as "Mr. Jack." I am here to testify in support of HB 3014. I do not represent my employer today, but I am the Safe Routes to School Coordinator at Springfield Public Schools and I lead a weekly walking school bus at Maple Elementary School.

Every Tuesday morning, I see the value that walking to school brings to the children that join our walking school bus. We meet in the morning about 45 minutes before school starts, and get high vis vests on all the kids. I bring my bluetooth speaker and turn on some music to make it fun. Then, we walk, picking up kids along the way and getting more high vis vests on them so that eventually, we look like a big, bright yellow caterpillar on the sidewalk.

These experiences are good for kids. They get some exercise in the morning and show up to school on time to eat breakfast, with their blood flowing to their brains, ready to learn. They spend time in the morning interacting with each other and with adults who are not their teacher. They navigate the environment around their school, developing spatial awareness. And, every child that walks or bikes to school represents one less car creating traffic around schools and polluting the air.

HB 3014 would help school districts by giving them the flexibility to meet their students' transportation needs in ways other than just bussing. Lots of schools have supplemental bus routes where kids are transported by bus from very close by because of a high-traffic street along the route. HB 3014 would give school districts the flexibility to replace these supplemental routes with crossing guards or walking school buses, alleviating the pressure on school districts in this era of bus driver shortages. I strongly urge you to support it.