

# As School Year Begins, Duckworth Re-Introduces Legislation To Improve School Bus Safety

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CHAMPAIGN, I.II - U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today announced the re-introduction of her legislation to help keep our kids safe as they travel to and from school. Duckworth, along with U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) are introducing the *School Bus Safety Act* today to implement safety recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to make school buses safer by ensuring there are seat belts at every seat and buses are equipped with safety measures like stability control and automatic braking systems. The bill would also create a grant program to help school districts modify school buses to meet these important safety modifications. U.S.

Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN-09) is introducing companion legislation in the House. Duckworth was joined today by Champaign Unit 4 School District Superintendent Dr. Shelia Boozer, and photos from today's event are available [here](#).

"No parent should have to worry about the safety of their children when they get on a school bus, but school buses often lack seat belts and other basic safety equipment that every parent demands," Duckworth said. "Nothing is more important than protecting our children, which is why I'm proud to be re-introducing the *School Bus Safety Act* to help prevent accidents, make accidents less severe and implement other commonsense safety recommendations that will save lives."

"Parents shouldn't have to worry about their child's safety on a school bus, whether they're traveling to school or a field trip or an away game," said Brown. "That means passing additional school bus safety measures into law, starting with our legislation to equip buses with seat belts and other safety measures. These are commonsense, long overdue steps to protect kids and make buses safer."

"Champaign Unit 4 Schools is responsible for safely transporting approximately 6,000 students to and from school daily," said Superintendent Dr. Shelia Boozer. "This is an important priority that has many challenges, so we support legislative measures that will help our Transportation Department (and others like us) during these tumultuous times. In addition to the important work on bus safety, I am hopeful that our leaders in Springfield and Washington D.C. will also explore solutions to our nationwide bus driver shortage. These things are imperative for us to provide secure and safe service to our students."

"I applaud Senator Duckworth's tireless efforts to make transportation safer, and that includes her sponsorship of the School Bus Safety Act," National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy said. "While school buses are often touted as the safest vehicle on our roads, there is always, always more we can do to protect the children they carry as well as every other road user. We're pleased that the legislation introduced by Sen. Duckworth would advance longstanding NTSB safety recommendations, such as requiring school buses to have three-point safety belts and collision-avoidance technology, among other vital safety enhancements. Just two-and-a-half weeks ago, an elementary school student lost their life and nearly two dozen other people were injured in a school bus crash that occurred in Ohio on the first day of school. This tragedy, and every school bus crash, serves as a painful reminder of the cost of inaction. We thank Sen. Duckworth for her leadership and look forward to working with Congress to ensure U.S. school buses are as safe as possible. The NTSB will not rest until the number of children lost to school bus tragedies is ZERO."

The *School Bus Safety Act* would require the Department of Transportation issue rules requiring all school buses include:

- A 3-point safety belt, which includes a seat belt across a lap as well as a shoulder harness to help protect passengers by restraining them in case of a collision.
- An Automatic Emergency Braking System, which helps prevent accidents and crashes by detecting objects or vehicles ahead of the bus and braking automatically.
- An Event Data Recorder (EDR) that can record pre- and post-crash data, driver inputs, and restraint usage and when a collision does occur.
- An Electronic Stability Control (ESC) System that will use automatic computer-controlled braking of individual wheels to assist the driver remain in control of the vehicle.
- A Fire Suppression System, which addresses engine fires.
- A Firewall that prohibits hazardous quantities of gas or flame to pass through the firewall from the engine compartment to the passenger compartment.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) 1,110 people have died in school transportation-related crashes between 2012 and 2021, which saw a total of 998 crashes. Duckworth has been a strong advocate of increasing school bus safety, originally introducing this legislation in 2018. Since, she's highlighted its importance at the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) conference and in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood.

The *School Bus Safety Act* is supported by the National Safety Council, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Center for Auto Safety, National Sheriffs 'Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Consumer Report.

“Seat belts save lives,” said Lorraine Martin, president and CEO of the National Safety Council. “We have known this for decades, and Senator Duckworth’s common-sense legislation addresses the overdue need for lifesaving safety technology that protects our youngest travelers. Traffic crashes are a leading cause of preventable death for children, and they deserve the chance to get to and from school safely every time; this legislation would make that possible.”

“It is a top priority for PTA to work with administrators and local, state and federal lawmakers to ensure the safety of all children during the school day and while traveling to and from school,” said Yvonne Johnson, president of National PTA. “Our association applauds Senator Duckworth for introducing the School Bus Safety Act to require and support the implementation of safety features on school buses that will help keep children safe.”

“Children, our most precious passengers, need the greatest level of safety in their vehicles, including school buses,” Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) President Cathy Chase said. “Proven advances, such as three-point seat belts, automatic emergency braking and electronic stability control, should be in all school buses to prevent and mitigate crashes. We thank Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Sherrod Brown (D-OH) for their leadership in re-introducing the School Bus Safety Act. Every child deserves to get to and from school safely, and no family should face the devastation of their child never coming home again.”