



Janet T. Mills  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MAINE  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
1 STATE HOUSE STATION  
AUGUSTA, MAINE  
04333-0001

November 5, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

RE: School Bus Driver Licensing Flexibilities

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I write today to address the safe transportation of students, which remains one of the biggest challenges in our state as we strive to find a balance between the bus driver shortage and student and driver safety. The state of Maine and my administration commend the US Department of Transportation's (DOT) Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) for its continued efforts in school bus passenger and transportation safety.

School districts across Maine have implemented creative approaches to addressing this driver shortage crisis - from sign-on bonuses and paid on the job training programs to collaboration with Adult Education programs for Commercial Driver's License prep courses - and I commend their work to hire more drivers. Despite these efforts, we continue to suffer from an extreme shortage of school bus drivers, resulting in a daily crisis for many school districts across our state. After consultation with the Maine Association for Pupil Transportation, the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles and school district transportation directors, I believe the following actions will help Maine in combating this issue.

I appreciate the extension of the Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) final rule compliance date from February 7, 2020 to February 7, 2022 and support US DOT FMCSA's rationale for adopting the ELDT program. However, due to the persistent shortage of drivers and the challenges presented by the COVID pandemic, school districts across Maine continue to operate under extremely difficult or crisis conditions. I am concerned that the untimeliness of the ELDT final rule compliance date could worsen this already dire situation. Therefore, I respectfully request that the February 7, 2022 compliance date of the ELDT program be extended further to help us weather these unusual and severe circumstances.



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

In addition, I am requesting that the FMCSA extend the waiver of the 14 day wait period before taking a skills test, a requirement in 49 CFR 383.25(e). We appreciate the extensions of this waiver to date and understand that the current waiver is due to expire on November 30, 2021. However, as previously stated, school districts remain in need of greater flexibility to ensure the continued development of Maine's school bus driver workforce at this critical time.

Thank you for your consideration of these important requests.

Sincerely,



Janet T. Mills  
Governor

Cc: Meera Joshi, Acting Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration  
Pender Makin, Commissioner, Maine Department of Education  
Bruce Van Note, Commissioner, Maine Department of Transportation



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER