

4. Public Comment: Please leave your comment for the Maine School Transportation Safety Commission here. All comments will be reviewed and shared with Commission members. \*

I'd like to start off by saying I appreciate the work that the commission is doing. I have been following every meeting through Zoom. I have agreed with almost every point that has been brought up in the meetings.

What I don't agree with, however, is the discussion that happened last week regarding school bus drivers taking a road test every five years. I have been driving school bus for 16 years, and am not satisfied with the six hours of training that our district provides us at the MAPT regional conference. I go to at least one national conference that provides me the training that I believe is needed for the job on my own dime. I believe most school bus drivers want more training than what is currently being provided. I believe training is part of the solution that is needed to provide safe transportation, but retesting every five years is just another hurdle that a lot of drivers won't go through.

Another issue that I believe is hindering getting the best drivers is the low pay. You get what you pay for. When I first started driving we were making more than double minimum wage, and there was always a pool of qualified applicants applying. Now that minimum wage has almost caught up to what drivers get paid, in my district at least, we don't get many applicants, which is forcing our director to hire anyone that applies. That hasn't been going so well.

The last thing I want to say is, I hope this commission does become permanent. There are a lot more issues that need to be discussed to continue making strides toward safer school transportation. I do believe, however, that there should be active, everyday bus drivers on the commission. It would help give a much broader understanding to the commission of the issues that we face everyday.

Thanks for everything you are doing for OUR students,

Jay Nicholson.