

April 6th, 2026

Megan Welter, Associate Commissioner of Public Education, Maine Department of Education

Dear Commissioner of Education,

I want to begin by expressing my support for the recently implemented new safety rules and policy requiring the retrofiting of school buses following both recent and past tragic accidents involving school children. In recent fatal accidents involving school children, I believe this measure does not address all root causes of these tragedies. I believe there are additional factors that deserve thoughtful attention to more fully address student safety.

From a community perspective, I believe there is an opportunity to strengthen awareness around parental involvement at bus stops. Example, training, encouraging parents with their children to be ready and waiting for the bus several minutes early, rather than running after it, could reduce risk. For younger students, having a parent or guardian present to help guide them safely across the road may further enhance safety.

As you are aware, CDL Class B bus drivers are subject to random drug & alcohol testing. In my years of experience as a school bus driver, I believe that while this system has value, it is not sufficient to identify individuals who struggle with alcohol misuse outside of testing windows.

School bus drivers are entrusted with transporting our most vulnerable population” our children”. This responsibility demands the highest level of accountability. Unfortunately, one observed concern regarding transportation leadership of school department allowing this approach having the same misuse, which I believe lack of accountability have contributed to an environment where alcohol related issues are not consistently addressed with treatment. This type of environment can undermine safety standards sends the wrong message to drivers who are responsible for transportation our precious cargo. There appears to be a lack of consistent driving law enforcement regarding the required treatment or follow-up for individuals identified with alcohol-related issues. Strengthening these policies could significantly improve safety outcomes.

Another area of concern is vehicle speed. There have been instances where buses appear to be traveling at speeds significantly above posted speed limits on our highways. This raises an important question about whether current practices fully reflect the level of caution appropriate when transporting our precious cargo.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these important matters. I hope these observations may contribute to ongoing efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all students in our care.

Sincerely,

Lana Smith