

Representative Margaret O'Brien Testimony Feb. 24, 2011 Judiciary Committee

Thank you Chairman Walsh and the committee for taking up these bills.

I ask that you support HB 4167 and 4168. These bills would mirror the already familiar law for injuring or killing a construction worker in a construction zone to do the same in a school bus zone. "School Bus Zone" as defined in the bill on page 2 is **THE AREA LYING WITHIN 20 FEET OF A SCHOOL BUS THAT HAS STOPPED AND IS DISPLAYING 2 ALTERNATELY FLASHING RED LIGHTS AT THE SAME LEVEL.**

School children, especially young children are vulnerable at bus stops. I have heard about many instances (and have seen for myself) motorists ignoring the flashing red lights of a school bus. This puts children at risk every time this occurs. Flashing red lights on a school bus are no different than a stop light or stop sign. However, school bus zones contain pedestrians ranging in age from 5 years, up to 19 years of age.

Here are a few statistics...

In Michigan, 22 pedestrians were struck at school bus stops while crossing the street to get on the bus between 2001 and 2003. One was fatal.

Source: MI State Police, April 2006

From 1998 to 2008, 1,564 people died in school transportation related crashes. Of that, 20% were pedestrians.

From 1998 to 2008, 149 school aged (under 19 years of age) pedestrian deaths have occurred. Of those, 47% are children 5 to 7 years of age.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2008

In closing, I believe these bills would create a greater awareness to drivers who currently ignore school bus stops and school bus crossings. The "Give'em a Break" campaign has done wonders for the protection of construction workers and given awareness of the dangers they encounter working on our roads. I believe these bills will do the same for our vulnerable young children who are getting on and off of their buses.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and I urge for a "yes" vote.