

ASSEMBLY, No. 1924

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED MAY 6, 1996

By Assemblymen BATEMAN and DeCROCE

1 AN ACT concerning school bus grab handles and supplementing
2 P.L.1965, c.119 (C.39:3B-1 et seq.).

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4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State
5 of New Jersey:

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7 1. As part of its periodic inspection of school buses, the Division
8 of Motor Vehicles shall determine whether the grab handle required
9 under regulations promulgated by the Department of Education is
10 properly installed and meets all applicable safety standards. When any
11 defect or failure to meet a safety standard is determined to exist, the
12 division shall order the bus removed from service until corrective
13 action is taken and the bus is reinspected.

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15 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

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STATEMENT

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20 The purpose of this bill is to prohibit the transportation of children
21 in school buses whose front-door grab handles are defectively
22 designed. The term "grab handle" refers to a bar installed alongside
23 the front-door steps of a school bus to assist children in boarding or
24 exiting the bus. Certain school buses have been equipped by their
25 manufacturers with grab handles that have a crevice between the
26 tapered end and the wall to which it is attached. Several children have
27 been killed or seriously injured when strings attached to their clothing
28 or backpacks were caught in this crevice as they exited the bus. The
29 bus drivers, unaware that the children were caught, pulled away from
30 a stop, dragging the children beneath the moving buses.

31 In school buses equipped with a defectively designed grab handle,
32 the installation of a rubber washer eliminates this "catching" hazard.
33 The design defect can be repaired in 30 minutes at a cost of
34 approximately \$10.

35 Under this bill, DMV inspectors must check the grab handle to see
36 if it is defectively designed. If the grab handle is defective, the bus is
37 immediately removed from service until it is repaired and reinspected.

1 Currently, DMV inspection procedures allow bus owners 30 days
2 within which to repair defective grab handles before the bus is taken
3 out of service.

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8 Requires school buses with defective grab handles to be taken out-of-
9 service until repaired.