

SENATE BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 362

with Senate committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 3, 1996

The Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No.362 with amendments.

Senate Bill No.362, as amended, requires the installation of a crossing control arm on all school buses used to transport students to or from public or nonpublic schools.

A crossing control arm is a safety device that is attached to the right front corner of a school bus. Each time the bus door is opened, the arm extends outward from the front of the bus. Its purpose is to prevent children who must cross the street after exiting the bus from walking too close to the front where the driver may be unable to see them.

The bill requires the Department of Education to reimburse each school district that owns and operates its own school buses and each school bus contractor that provides transportation for pupils to and from public or nonpublic schools an amount up to \$300 per bus for retrofitting existing buses and an amount up to \$200 per bus for new buses purchased after enactment.

The bill requires that priority for retrofitting with a crossing control arm be given to all buses that transport elementary school children.

Within 60 days following enactment, each board of education and school bus contractor must submit a list of all buses used to transport children to and from schools. Thereafter, school districts and bus contractors may apply for reimbursement for the costs of crossing arms by filling out forms and attaching receipts for the purchase of the arm through an authorized dealer.

As amended and reported, this bill is identical to Assembly, No. 1567 (1R) ACA of 1996 (Roberts/Bodine).

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

The committee amended the bill with the approval of the sponsor to:

* Delete language that would have exempted school buses from the crossing control arm requirement if the bus were operated on

routes where no pupil needed to cross a street prior to boarding or upon leaving the bus.

- * Require the retrofitting of all existing school buses with crossing control arms.

- * Provide for a phase-in over a two year period of the requirement to retrofit existing school buses.

- * Provide for a reimbursement of up to \$300 per bus for retrofitting existing buses and \$200 per bus for new buses purchased after enactment.

- * Require that priority be given to the installation of crossing control arms on buses transporting elementary school students.

- * Clarify that the control arm requirement applies to buses used to transport nonpublic school pupils as well as public school pupils.

- * Require bus owners to provide a list of all school buses used in the State to the Commissioner of Education and to apply to the Department of Education for the authorized reimbursements.

- * Change the effective date to recognize that the requirement in the bill applies to all existing school buses, not just newly purchased ones.

FISCAL IMPACT

This bill requires the Department of Education to reimburse, over a two year period, school districts that own and operate school buses and school bus contractors an amount of up to, but not exceeding, \$300 per bus to retrofit school buses with a crossing control arm and \$200 per bus for the cost of a crossing control arm on each new school bus purchased after enactment. An appropriation to the Department of Education for the costs of these reimbursements is not provided in this bill.

It is estimated that retrofitting of existing school buses will cost the State \$3.6 million over a period of two fiscal years, one half of this amount in fiscal year 1997 and one half in fiscal year 1998. In addition, it is estimated that approximately 1,000 new school buses are purchased annually. The cost to department for reimbursement at an average cost of up to \$200 per new bus will be approximately \$200,000 annually.