

For Immediate Release

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National School Transportation Association Applauds Introduction of the Driving Forward Act in House & Senate

WASHINGTON, DC- The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) recently hosted its annual Capitol Hill Bus-In in the Nation's Capital from March 26-28, 2025, where the group announced the formal introduction of one of its top legislative initiatives the - Driving Forward Act by Representative John Carter (TX-31). NSTA previously identified the under the hood testing requirement to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) as a major barrier of entry to those interested in becoming a school bus driver. NSTA Advocacy Team efforts have ranged from emergency waivers to exemption applications, and now it has once again reached the halls of Congress in bill form.

The Driving Forward Act was previously introduced in the United States House of Representatives during the 118th Congress (H.R. 8041), by Rep. Carter, and this session, he has reintroduced the bill in the 119th Congress (2025-2026), as H.R.2360 - to permanently extend the exemption from the engine compartment portion of the pre-trip vehicle inspection skills testing requirement for school bus drivers, and for other purposes. In addition to Carter, Rep. Tom Cole (OK-4), Rep. Jason Smith (MO-8), Rep. Virginia Foxx (NC-5), Rep. David Valadao (CA-22), Rep. Troy Nehls (TX-22), and Rep. Keith Self (TX-3) joined as original co-sponsors. Carter touted the introduction of the measure at the NSTA Capitol Hill Recap Reception & Dinner at the Kimpton-George on the evening of March 26, 2025.

A Senate version of the legislation, sponsored by Senators Cornyn (R-TX), Baldwin (D-WI), Blackburn (R-TN), Kelly (D-AZ) and Gillibrand (D-NY), was introduced as S. 1284 on April 3, 2025.

The origins of the under the hood exemption stems from a letter drafted by NSTA executive director Curt Macysyn in 2021 and sent to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) highlighting the barrier to entry that the under the hood portion of the CDL exam was causing. An ensuing meeting with senior FMCSA staff resulted in a series of three 90-day emergency waivers, which waived the under the hood testing requirement in states that chose to adopt the waiver. Ultimately, NSTA petitioned for a 5-year exemption believing that it would result in more widespread adoption. In November of 2022, the FMCSA announced a two-year exemption from the under the hood testing requirement.

Since the initial series of 90-day emergency waivers were granted by FMCSA beginning on January 3, 2022, and continuing through the first two-year exemption granted by FMCSA on November 27, 2022, thirteen states have adopted the Under the Hood Exemption (Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin). Overall, the Under the Hood Exemption has seen almost 1,300 school bus drivers licensed utilizing it, resulting in nearly 64,500 students who can be transported to school via this NSTA Advocacy Team initiative.

The data used in this calculation was acquired through various state sources that the organization has been able to partner with throughout the duration of the emergency waivers and initial two-year exemption. NSTA used this consistent momentum to push Congress to reintroduce the Driving Forward Act in the 119th Congress, and the newly introduced measure also states that "for the 6-year period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Transportation shall require any State that participates in the exemption described in subsection (a) to submit to the Secretary an annual report for each those 6 years describing the number of drivers that obtain a commercial drivers' license

under such exemption.” NSTA hopes to use this data to demonstrate the widespread success of this initiative.

As NSTA members walked the halls of Capitol Hill at the 2025 NSTA Capitol Hill Bus-In, the Advocacy Team was working with Senators John Cornyn (TX) and Tammy Baldwin (WI) to become prime sponsors on a Senate version of the bill that was introduced on April 3, 2025. Lobbying on this key piece of legislation was a focal point at Bus-In, and as a result of 153 meetings on Capitol Hill, several new co-sponsors signed up on the initiative, and more are expected in the coming weeks.

“In Washington, NSTA once again demonstrated the strength of its lobbying program with a record number of attendees, and volume of Congressional meetings. The path to getting an under the testing exemption for school bus drivers has been a long journey, but with the introduction of the Driving Forward Act in both the House and Senate, we are poised to achieve final success in our quest to attract more school bus drivers to the profession,” said NSTA Executive Director Curt Macysyn.

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About NSTA: The National School Transportation Association has been the voice of private school bus contractors, manufacturers, and suppliers since 1964. The association provides school transportation professionals with the tools and resources they need to make school buses safe, affordable, and efficient nationwide.

NOTE – Photographs attached

1. Rep. John Carter (TX-31) addresses attendees of the 2025 NSTA Capitol Hill Bus-In at its Capitol Hill Recap Reception & Dinner at the Kimpton-George on March 26, 2025.
2. Attendees of the 2025 NSTA Capitol Hill Bus-In gather on the steps of the U.S. Capitol for a group photograph before heading to their meetings at Congressional Offices.