

**For Immediate Release**

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**NSTA Advocacy Team Victory - FMCSA Grants Additional Two Years to the NSTA “Under the Hood” Exemption**

**WASHINGTON, DC** - On December 2, 2024, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) announced its final decision to renew the exemption granted to the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) for a period of two years to permit all commercial driver’s license (CDL) applicants seeking a school bus endorsement to forgo the engine compartment portion of the pre-trip vehicle inspection skills testing requirement, known informally as the “under-the-hood” testing requirement. Drivers issued CDLs pursuant to the requested exemption are restricted to intrastate operation of school buses only.

The renewal of the exemption represents another milestone for NSTA, as it pursues suitable remedies in the quest to mitigate the school bus driver shortage.

Since the initial two-year Under the Hood Exemption granted by FMCSA in 2022, thirteen jurisdictions (Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin) have implemented the exemption at the state level. According to statistics gathered by NSTA, approximately 1,200 school bus drivers have been licensed utilizing the exemption. Averaging 70 students per school bus, the exemption has resulted in 84,000 children being transported to and from school daily on the yellow bus. According to data obtained by NSTA, States such as Texas (610 Drivers) and New Jersey (340 Drivers) have utilized the Under the Hood Exemption extensively to address the driver shortage.

In its advisory, FMCSA stated:

“FMCSA has evaluated NSTA's application and the public comments and grants the exemption renewal request for a two-year period. Due to the limited scope, terms, conditions, and restrictions of the exemption and the existing regulatory requirements that remain in place, FMCSA has determined that the “under-the-hood” exemption will likely achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to the level of safety that would be obtained absent the exemption. The exemption does not apply to the remaining elements of the pre-trip vehicle inspection components of the skills test, as set forth in [49 CFR 383.113\(a\)\(1\)\(ii-ix\)](#). Accordingly, drivers obtaining CDLs under this exemption will have demonstrated the ability to safely operate the special features of a school bus.”

“NSTA appreciates the FMCSA decision to grant an additional two years to the current the ‘Under-the-Hood’ testing requirement exemption. As we have seen, this measure has proven beneficial to both public and private operators within the student transportation industry, and

more importantly, it has been demonstrated that we are providing more students continued access to education because of the exemption’s ability to garner more drivers into the pupil transportation driver pool,” said NSTA President, Dan Kobussen of Kobussen Buses in Wisconsin.

“NSTA thanks FMCSA for their diligence in granting our exemption extension application for an additional two-years. I’m proud to say that NSTA has been a trailblazer in the effort to address the bus driver shortage, as this particular effort dates back to 2021. In the short term, we will continue to demonstrate the positive impact of the exemption on our driver pool, and notably without any reduction to student safety. Finally, our ultimate goal is the permanent adoption of the exemption federally – followed even more widespread utilization throughout all fifty states,” NSTA Executive Director Curt Macysyn concluded.

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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.