

Hello House Committee on Education,

I am writing to encourage support for HB-3014. Each week I receive between 1 and 8 notifications from the Portland Public School District (PPS) regarding cancellations to bus routes for my son's elementary school. Most Portland communities in PPS and other school districts rely on the state granted transportation funds to support bus routes to school. Some even need the waiver to support bus routes within the 1-1.5 mile radius due to the lack of options for alternative safe routes to school for students. With the pressures on fining bus drivers contributing to weekly bus route cancellations, alternative means of getting to school are necessary.

My 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Alameda Elementary Elliot Valk participates in the weekly Bike Bus that is organized by Coach Sam Balto and other volunteers. This bike bus is very popular, sometimes having upwards of 175 participants weekly. Elliot says, "It's a great way to start your day with friends, community and exercise. A good way to get the wiggles out and get to school in a fun and safe way."

The Bike Bus is an example of an alternate means of getting students to school outside of and within the 1-1.5 mile radius for schools that need safe routes. This type of alternative transportation and others alleviate the need to rely on only one type of transportation, that becomes a less reliable option during economic periods of labor shortage.

The current requirements for use of state issued transportation funds for schools limit the district from finding alternative solutions to solve the issue of a lack of bus drivers. Flexibility in the use of these funds would help districts be more agile with these pressures to provide alternatives to more reliable and safe routes for kids to get to school. The funds can be used to compensate the numerous people that are currently volunteering to organize the rides or act as crossing guards and to provide safety equipment.

I encourage you to support HB-3014 so that school districts can use the transportation funding flexibly support more than one option for getting students to school safely.

Thank you,

Jennifer Dzienis

Beaumont-Wilshire, NE Portland