



Representative Hoa Nguyen  
Oregon House District 48

HB 3014 — SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

**4/26 House Revenue Hearing Testimony**

Hello Chair Nathanson, Vice Chairs Walters and Reschke, and members of the House Revenue Committee. For the record my name is Hoa Nguyen, State Representative for HD48, East Portland & Damascus. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3014, the School Transportation Options Bill. HB 3014 gives schools the flexibility they need to meet unforeseen challenges in getting students to school safely, reliably, and on time.

I'm proud of the collaborative work with our partners that went into crafting this bill; because of that work, HB 3014 passed unanimously out of House Ed and has earned bipartisan and bicameral support from our colleagues.

Currently, districts are only able to be reimbursed from the State School Transportation Fund for use of traditional yellow school buses or in some cases, school-owned vans. But that isn't always the best option for all students or the best use of schools' resources.

For example, sometimes, schools have to spend their transportation dollars on bussing students who live close enough to their school to walk, but can't, due to unsafe infrastructure. Paying for a crossing guard or walk bus leader is more efficient than paying for the school bus to pick up that student.

With the passage of HB 3014, districts will be able to request reimbursement from ODE for alternative transportation options like transit passes, crossing guards or coordinators to lead walk and bike buses. As we struggle to serve Oregon students equitably, our schools need the ability to utilize *all* available resources.

I want to recognize the concerns that our partners at the Oregon School Employees Association have brought up regarding potential negative effects of approving reimbursement for transit passes on the bus driver workforce. It is clear that this critical sector of our school systems is struggling, as evidenced by frequently canceled bus routes, due to a lack of drivers, often leaving students unable to get to school. I agree that we must have a frank

conversation about how to better support our school bus drivers and address this workforce shortage. However, this is not the intent of *this* bill.

Passage of HB3014 will not result in schools choosing to let go of their drivers in favor of giving all their students bus passes, as OSEA fears. Frankly, even in the metro area, there is not enough transit coverage to make this a realistic option. Lack of transit is also an issue I hope to work with school and transportation partners to address in the near future. Again, this is a separate issue from *this* bill. I'm committed to my partnership with OSEA and open to finding additional sideboards that can more fully address their concerns.

It's important to note that to be reimbursed for providing transit passes to students, a district will have to demonstrate that all other transportation options have been considered and proved inadequate. Additionally, they will have to submit their transportation plans for approval to their district boards, who will then be submitting these plans to the State Board of Education. These plans will need to be approved at both levels before schools will be reimbursed. Finally, schools will not be reimbursed for any increase in costs that are due to use of alternative transportation. Our intent is to give our local schools the power to decide what is best for their communities; we are not giving them free rein with our tight school budgets.

I believe our main objective here is to serve our students and ensure they have every opportunity to benefit from their education. A lack of safe and reliable transportation is one of the main reasons for chronic absenteeism, and poor attendance is one of the biggest barriers to student success.

I ran for this office to try and find solutions to the challenges I see on the ground in my work as an educator. I firmly believe that HB 3014 is a critical step towards giving our schools the tools to address this challenge and serve Oregon students. Thank You.