

Submitter: Bill Bradley
On Behalf Of: ATU 757
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1124

My name is Bill Bradley, an Executive Board Officer for ATU 757, which represents over 5000 transit and school bus professionals in Oregon and SW Washington. I'm here on behalf of the frontline transit operators working in the State of Oregon. I'm testifying in support of Senate Bill 1124, which closes a critical gap in our statutes to better protect the men and women who keep our communities moving.

Currently, assault on a transit operator rises to a Class C felony if the operator is in direct control of the vehicle at the time of the attack. This limitation leaves a significant loophole. Many violent incidents occur when operators are stepping outside the driver's seat—helping riders, checking equipment, or performing other official duties. Senate Bill 1124 fixes that gap by applying the Class C felony standard whenever operators are performing these essential duties—not just while they're physically behind the wheel.

This change is vitally important because violence against our operators is on the rise. Consider the following incidents we've seen, all occurring while the bus was stopped:

- One operator was attacked simply for advising a rider to be more visible at night so they wouldn't be passed up. This resulted in injuries where the operator spent months out of the driver's seat.
- Another operator was spat on for explaining that the bus was in training mode and the regular route bus would soon arrive. She had to get shots and have ongoing follow-up testing to ensure she did not contract diseases.
- And most heartbreaking: an operator was severely assaulted after reminding a rider to wear shoes, resulting in this dedicated individual never returning to the career they loved.

These examples highlight the daily risks operators face in the course of their normal responsibilities—often performed outside the driver's seat. By updating the statute through SB 1124, we can ensure that perpetrators of such assaults are held appropriately accountable, whether an operator is actively driving or simply performing official duties.

Along with closing this legal gap, additional measures are being pursued by ATU and our transit agency partners to protect our transit operators:

1. Operator Barriers – Physical barriers in the driver's area help deter aggression and protect operators during violent incidents.
2. De-Escalation Training – Comprehensive, ongoing training equips operators with the skills to handle volatile situations safely.
3. Improved Transit Security – More visible security personnel and better

coordination with local law enforcement can help reduce violent encounters.

Taken together, these steps—alongside SB 1124—will foster a safer environment for both our operators and the public. I urge you to support this legislation as it is a necessary tool to ensure the safety of our transit operators

Thank you for your time and consideration.