



# Jefferson County North Schools

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USD 339 Nortonville—Winchester

Denise Jennings, Superintendent      Kristina Edwards, Clerk

310 5th Street Winchester, Kansas 66097

913-774-2000 Fax 913-774-2027

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Honored Judiciary Committee Members,

I am Denise Jennings, a member of the Stop-arm Committee, Jefferson County North School Superintendent and Transportation Director, and my favorite role, grandmother of a preschooler in the state of Kansas. I appreciate you considering HB 2532 and thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

I have participated in the newly developed stop-arm committee in Kansas. The statistics for violations are staggering. We are working to educate the public on the laws regarding stop-arms on school buses. But, we believe your help is crucial in making drastic reduction in violations.

Our stop-arm committee members share the concern that drivers illegally pass school buses with little to no fear of being caught. On the contrary, few people deliberately avoid paying tolls in Kansas presumably due to the belief they will be caught, by cameras. We welcome the ability to decrease the illegal passing of school buses in the same manner.

I realize the passing of HB 2532 may open doors for other concerns, but I doubt anyone in the room feels any of those concerns would outweigh the life of a child entering or exiting a bus.

Twice in recent years, we had very close calls with vehicles passing a Jefferson County North school bus. One happened as children were passing in front of the school bus. A truck started around the driver's side of the bus. Thankfully, my driver was quick-witted and honked the horn to stop the driver. The driver never stopped. But, the children froze in place in front of the bus when the horn honked. I believe the driver saved lives that day.

We had another occurrence when students were about to exit the bus. A driver went into the gravel on the passenger side of the bus driving approximately 50 miles per hour on the shoulder of the road as it passed inches from the door. The children exiting the bus would have been lost to us had the driver not noticed the vehicle and left the door shut in front of the first child. Again, the driver was able to save lives.

In both incidents, the drivers were completely focused on the road and noticed in time to make a difference. Students responded admirably and were safe because of such. Our training was successful. However, in neither occasion was the driver capable of gathering the license plate number or able to capture a facial recognition of the driver. Both of which are expected in order to prosecute under current law.

This year, I have the privilege of escorting my only grandchild to the bus in the mornings. She is four. I have witnessed several times her lack of concern for possible drivers on our country road. As the bus pulls up, she is focused on getting to the door. I can't imagine living in the city where traffic is constantly moving and quite unpredictable for young children and bus drivers.

I urge you to support HB 2532. Please help us avoid looking back, and wishing we had, in the event Kansas ever becomes a horrifying statistic of a stop-arm violation gone wrong.

Sincerely,

Denise Jennings