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Testimony on Assembly Bill 281

Representative Keith Ripp
Assembly Committee on Transportation

I want to thank committee members for allowing me to present testimony today in favor of Assembly Bill 281.

I have brought this bill forward today at the request of the Department of Transportation. This bill is similar to AB 280 in that it is updating statute to allow for current exterior lighting configurations used on school buses.

Wisconsin's statutes are currently out of sync with what is allowed on the federal level for these lighting configurations. Because of that, it is unlawful for Wisconsin to operate newly-built buses with the lighting package installed by the manufacturer. There are very few vendors that are willing to build school buses that do not meet federal standards. This requires bus companies in Wisconsin to either buy from vendors who are willing to buy Wisconsin-legal buses, or they have to manually cut wires, remove light bulbs, or change lenses on their own to make the buses compliant.

Current law also requires Wisconsin school bus companies and school districts to purchase older models of buses that are Wisconsin-compliant. This can cause a safety issue because the models are not as up-to-date and more prone to breakage. This bill simply brings Wisconsin law in line with federal regulations.

This bill would not require anyone to retrofit older buses to meet current standards.

Thank you members, I ask for your support and I would be more than happy to answer any questions.