

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2025-2026 SIMULATION SESSION

SENATE BILL

NO 13

Introduced by Senator Caballero

October 1, 2025

An act that would improve school bus safety by authorizing the statewide use of stop-arm camera systems.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 13, as introduced, Caballero. School Bus Safety Act

Existing law, Vehicle Code Section 22454, requires drivers to stop when a school bus is stopped to load or unload children and has its stop signal arm extended and red lights flashing. A driver who unlawfully passes violates this law. However, these violations are mostly enforced if an officer is present to view the infraction. As a result, thousands of violations occur daily without any repercussions, creating a significant risk to the children's safety. Pilot programs conducted in Tulare County and Sacramento show hundreds of violations within weeks, showing widespread noncompliance.

This bill, the School Bus Safety Act of 2025, would authorize the use of stop-arm cameras on school buses to catch drivers who pass illegally, violating Section 22454 of the Vehicle Code. This bill would establish the School Bus Safety Enforcement Program within the California Highway Patrol to run the program, review evidence, and help local school districts use the technology.

The bill would appropriate \$15,000,000 from the General Fund to the Department of the California Highway Patrol for purposes of implementing the program, to remain available until the fiscal year of 2030-2031. Money from civil fines would go into a special School Bus Safety Fund to keep the program going in future years. The bill would further establish privacy protections for collected footage, including limits on its use and mandatory deletion timelines.

Vote: majority Appropriation: yes Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: yes

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

- (a) Everyday, over one million California children rely on school buses for safe transportation to their schools.
- (b) Vehicle Code §22454 requires drivers to stop when a school bus has its stop signal arm extended and red lights flashing.
- (c) Despite this law, thousands of violations occur annually, creating serious risks to child safety.
- (d) Pilot programs in Tulare County and Sacramento documented hundreds of violations within weeks, showing widespread noncompliance.
- (e) Other states, including New York and Virginia, have successfully reduced violations through the use of automated stop-arm camera enforcement systems.

(f) Investment in enforcement and safety technology will deter violations, protect children, and reduce preventable injuries and fatalities.

(g) It is the intent of the Legislature to ensure child safety during school bus transportation through consistent enforcement of school bus stop-arm violations.

SEC. 2. This act shall be known and may be cited as the *School Bus Safety Act of 2025*.

SEC. 2.5. For purposes of this act, the following definitions apply:

(a) “Stop-arm camera system” means a camera that captures video evidence of vehicles unlawfully passing a school bus with its stop signal arm extended and red lights flashing.

(b) “Local educational agency” means a school district, county office of education, or charter school operating school buses.

(c) “Violation” means any instance of unlawful passing as defined in Section 22454 of the Vehicle Code.

SEC. 3. The Department of the California Highway Patrol shall establish the School Bus Safety Enforcement Program to coordinate and oversee the use of stop-arm camera systems statewide.

(a) The program shall:

(1) Approve camera systems for use in California.

(2) Review and forward video evidence of violations to the correct law enforcement office.

(3) Provide technical assistance to local educational agencies implementing stop-arm camera systems.

(b) Participation in the program shall be voluntary for local educational agencies.

SEC. 4. The Department shall administer grants to local educational agencies for the purchase and installation of stop-arm camera systems.

(a) Priority for grants shall be given to:

(1) School districts with limited funding

(2) School districts with high documented rates of unlawful passing.

(3) School districts with a high proportion of K-12 students reliant on school transportation

(4) Rural school districts

SEC. 5. The sum of fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000) is hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of the California Highway Patrol for the purposes of this act, beginning in the 2025–26 fiscal year.

(a) Funds may be used until the 2030-2031 fiscal year, where its effect can be reevaluated and funded appropriately.

(b) The Department may use up to five percent of appropriated funds for program administration.

(c) Fifteen percent of civil fines collected from violations enforced under this act shall be deposited into the School Bus Safety Fund, which is hereby created in the State Treasury. Money in the fund shall be continuously appropriated to sustain the program beyond the initial appropriation.

SEC. 6. Any video or photographic evidence collected under this act shall be retained by the Department of the California Highway Patrol for no longer than 30 days after the conclusion of a case.

(a) Footage shall be used solely for the enforcement of violations of Section 22454 of the Vehicle Code.

(b) Any citation issued under this act may be contested, and footage and reports from the Department may be admitted as evidence in those proceedings.

SEC. 7. The Department may utilize automated detection systems, including artificial intelligence, to flag potential violations captured by stop-arm camera systems.

(a) Any potential violation flagged under subdivision (a) shall be reviewed and verified by a trained employee of the Department before the issuance of a citation.

(b) Bus drivers may submit incident reports to the Department to assist in identifying potential violations.