

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

November 22, 2019

Dr. James C. Owens  
Acting Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE, West Building  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Acting Administrator Owens:

We write to express our serious concern following recent reports revealing the use of school buses with safety defects to transport Minnesota students and to request additional information on what the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) can do to improve its oversight of the maintenance and safety of school buses.

First Student is the largest school bus provider in Minnesota with over one thousand school buses. According to the latest inspection data from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, one out of every eight First Student school buses failed to meet Minnesota safety standards this year due to serious defects such as unsafe brakes, flat tires, steering issues, and faulty emergency door buzzers.<sup>1</sup> In addition, despite the fact that First Student received advance notice of inspections, some First Student school buses were required to obtain further repairs within two weeks of inspections.<sup>2</sup>

NHTSA plays a critical role in ensuring the safety of our students, including the setting of minimum safety standards for school buses and issuing recalls for school buses that do not meet federal requirements.<sup>3</sup> While states regulate how school buses are used, NHTSA also plays an integral part in issuing recommendations for state student transportation safety programs.<sup>4</sup>

Minnesota families deserve to know that the school buses that students ride in are safe. In light of the concerning safety issues that have been raised, we respectfully request that you respond to the following questions:

- (1) Does NHTSA have data on how many students are injured on school buses each year as a result of safety defects?
- (2) How many recalls does NHTSA issue for school buses each year?

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<sup>1</sup> Mahamud, Faiza. (2019, November 5) *Safety issues plague Minnesota's largest school bus provider*. Star Tribune. Retrieved from <http://www.startribune.com/failed-school-bus-inspections-raise-concern/564373582/?refresh=true>.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Public Safety 2019 report. Retrieved from <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/msp/commercial-vehicles/Documents/2019-school-bus-inspection-results.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Heller, Marsha. (2019, October 22). *More than 50K School Buses Recalled by NHTSA*. KFVS 12. Retrieved from <https://www.kfvs12.com/2019/10/22/more-than-k-school-buses-recalled-by-nhtsa/>.

<sup>4</sup> Highway Safety Program Guideline 17: Pupil Transportation Safety. NHTSA. Retrieved from <https://one.nhtsa.gov/nhtsa/whatsup/tea21/tea21programs/pages/PupilTransportation.htm>.

- (3) What is NHTSA doing to coordinate with school bus providers to ensure that information regarding safety defects and school bus recalls is easily accessible?
- (4) What additional resources does NHTSA need to improve its oversight of school buses and ensure student safety?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Collin C. Peterson  
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



Angie Craig  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



Dean Phillips  
Member of Congress