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# Romaine Robert Quinn

STATE SENATOR • 25<sup>TH</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Romaine Robert Quinn  
To: Senate Committee on Education  
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 210  
Relating to: allowing a school board member to serve as a volunteer school bus driver  
Date: April 25, 2023

Good Morning Chairman Jagler and member of the committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 210, which allows a school board member to serve as a volunteer school bus driver.

Districts around the state are facing a real challenge in finding enough bus drivers to get kids to school. This bill looks to help fix this problem by allowing individuals who are already engaged in school activities to serve in an additional way.

The common law doctrine of incompatibility doesn't allow a person to hold multiple public positions when their duties might conflict, however there are a couple of exceptions in statute specifically for school board members. Currently they are allowed to be volunteer coaches and extracurricular activity supervisors. Our bill adds an exception to allow school board members to serve as volunteer school bus drivers.

The same requirements would be in place that drivers employed or contracted by the district have to follow: the individual must have a school bus endorsement from the Department of Transportation, hold a valid commercial driver's license, pass a criminal background check, and meet physical and medical standards.

Does this solve the whole issue of bus driver shortages? No, but it provides an additional tool for districts to turn to if they need.

Again, thank you for holding a hearing on SB 210 and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Rep. Bare Testimony  
Senate Education Committee 4/25/23  
Senate Bill 210

Chairman Jagler and members of the Senate Committee on Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 210, I'd like to thank Senators Quinn and Hesselbein as well as Representatives Johnson and Kitchens for joining me in introducing this important legislation.

Shortly after I was sworn in as a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly, I received a request from a constituent who serves as the President of the New Glarus School Board asking me to draft legislation that would allow school board members to drive school busses on a volunteer basis. Currently, school board members can serve as a volunteer coach for the basketball team, but they can't legally drive the basketball team to a game even if they have the proper certifications. In a time when many of our school districts are struggling to find enough drivers to get students safely to and from school, I am glad to have been able to co-author bi-partisan legislation to help increase the pool of drivers for our school districts.

I encourage members of the Senate Education Committee to consider supporting this important bi-partisan legislation.

Sincerely,

State Representative Mike Bare

80<sup>th</sup> Assembly District



## **DIANNE H. HESSELBEIN**

STATE SENATOR • SENATE DISTRICT 27

### Testimony of Sen Dianne Hesselbein on Senate Bill 210

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 210, legislation that would answer a request from a constituent and school board member seeking the opportunity to serve as a volunteer school bus driver.

With districts across the state facing shortages of willing school bus drivers we were happy to put this legislation forward.

This legislation would create an exception allowing a school board member willing to meet all of the requirements for a school bus driver to serve in their district as a volunteer without compensation beyond the costs associated with obtaining or renewing the required CDL and school bus endorsement.

We are hopeful this small measure of assistance for districts, especially in rural Wisconsin, can be adopted to give those willing and able to add to their service that opportunity.

I also want to thank Emily with Legislative Council for her work on this and of course Sen Quinn, Rep. Johnson and Rep. Kitchens for working with Rep. Bare and I, agreeing to author the bill and forwarding the legislation.

I'm sorry I'm unable to be at the hearing today but thank you again for your consideration of this important bill and my support for it.

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# School District of New Glarus

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**TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM L. OEMICHEN**  
**SB 210**  
**Wisconsin Senate Education Committee**  
**April 25, 2023**

Good Morning Committee Chair Jagler and Committee Members:

I am President of the New Glarus School Board and am testifying on behalf of the New Glarus School Board in support of SB 210. The New Glarus School District supports this legislation because Wisconsin school districts face a significant shortage of school bus drivers. This shortage includes both during the day, and during the afternoon and evenings when we transport students to and from extra-curricular events.

SB 210 would amend Wis. Stat. Section 120.20(1) to allow school board members to volunteer to drive school buses provided they meet the following requirements: (1) the school board member would be required to have a school bus endorsement from the Department of Transportation, (2) to hold a valid commercial driver's license, (3) to abstain on school bus transportation issues before the school board, and (4) to serve as a volunteer with no compensation. The school board member could, however, be reimbursed for the cost of any required licenses or training.

A New Glarus School Board member drove a bus for the school district on a volunteer basis prior to being elected to the School Board in April of 2022. Our legal counsel advised us following the 2022 Spring Election that the board that the newly elected school board member was required by state law to quit driving a school bus. The school board member, and potentially other members of our school board, would like to volunteer as school bus drivers, particularly in times of high need. This is consistent with our desire to serve our community.

We are aware of school board members in other districts who are driving school buses as volunteers. These school board members are serving their communities in good faith and out of a sense of civic commitment. Yet, incredibly, their civic commitment violates state law. We believe this needs to be changed.

Thank you Senator Quinn and co-authors for sponsoring SB 210 and thank you Committee Chair Jagler and Senate Education Committee Members for your consideration.





# WISCONSIN SCHOOL BUS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of the Wisconsin School Bus Association  
IN SUPPORT OF SB210  
Before the Senate Committee on Education  
April 25, 2023

Good morning Chair Jagler, Vice Chair Quinn, and members of the Committee. My name is Cherie Hime, Executive Director for the Wisconsin School Bus Association (WSBA) that represents more than 200 members including commercial operators, school districts, and suppliers to the school bus industry. I am here today to speak in support of SB210.

The Association's objective is to promote and encourage safety in school bus transportation in Wisconsin. As you may know, since the return from the COVID-19 pandemic, some schools had to cancel or change bus routes due to the lack of school bus drivers. Drivers left for other jobs that were available when schools were shut down and many did not return. A strong economy and low unemployment are also factors that have contributed to the driver shortage. Nationally and in Wisconsin, 54 percent of bus contractors are working with a 6 to 15 percent shortage of drivers.

Unnecessary obstacles that prevent qualified individuals from obtaining a commercial drivers license and endorsement to drive a school bus should be removed and this legislation assists in doing so. WSBA believes that allowing school board members the opportunity to become a school bus driver would increase the pool of potential drivers. The net benefit of this change would likely result in additional school bus driver candidates that would go a long way to alleviating the current shortage of school bus drivers that roughly 50% of Wisconsin's school children rely on to transport them to school.

Additionally, WSBA would prefer an amendment that would remove the restriction of a school board member agreeing to abstain from voting on any issue that comes before the school board that substantially and directly concerns school bus drivers. Those decisions should be made by a school board as they would know best how to handle any potential concerns or issues, rather than creating a blanket requirement in state statute.

WSBA thanks Senator Hesselbein for her leadership with this bill and all co-sponsors for supporting initiatives to increase the school bus driver pool.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Cherie A. Hime  
Executive Director