

Senate File 2047 - Introduced

SENATE FILE 2047

BY DAWSON

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to school buses and other vehicles used to
2 transport pupils.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 321.1, subsection 69, paragraph d, Code
2 2024, is amended to read as follows:

3 *d.* New or used motor vehicles designed to carry not more
4 than ~~ten~~ twelve persons as passengers, including the driver,
5 ~~or used passenger vans designed to carry not more than twelve~~
6 ~~persons as passengers, including the driver,~~ either school
7 owned or privately owned, which are used to transport pupils
8 to activity events in which the pupils are participants or
9 used to transport pupils to their homes in case of illness or
10 other emergency situations. The vehicles operated under the
11 provisions of this paragraph shall be operated by employees of
12 the school district who are specifically approved by the local
13 superintendent of schools for the assignment.

14 Sec. 2. Section 321.373, subsection 2, Code 2024, is amended
15 to read as follows:

16 2. Rules prescribed for school buses shall provide
17 standards for structural strength, materials, and insulation
18 of the school bus body; color; seat and aisle arrangement;
19 dimension and construction of service door; control of the
20 front door or doors; emergency door and its location and
21 construction; windows; roof ventilators; heaters; location,
22 filling, and draining of the fuel tank; bumpers and how they
23 shall be attached to the bus; lettering and identification
24 of the bus; stop signal arm; and warning lights and flashing
25 lights; and shall authorize the use of vehicles modified or
26 manufactured to accommodate wheelchair access with or without
27 the use of a ramp.

28 Sec. 3. Section 321.373, subsection 3, paragraphs a and c,
29 Code 2024, are amended to read as follows:

30 *a.* The rules prescribed for school buses shall include
31 special rules for passenger automobiles, and other vehicles
32 designed to carry ~~ten~~ twelve or fewer persons, including the
33 driver, when used as school buses.

34 *c.* The rules shall allow new or used passenger vans designed
35 to carry twelve or fewer passengers, including the driver, and

1 weighing ten thousand pounds or less, to be used as school
2 buses if the van does not carry more passengers than there are
3 safety belts or safety harnesses in the van as installed by
4 the manufacturer. The operator of the van shall comply with
5 the qualification, licensing, and instruction requirements set
6 forth in sections 321.375 and 321.376.

7 EXPLANATION

8 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with
9 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

10 Under current law, every vehicle operated for the
11 transportation of children to or from school is considered
12 a school bus, with limited exceptions including new or used
13 motor vehicles designed to carry not more than 10 persons
14 as passengers, including the driver, or used passenger vans
15 designed to carry not more than 12 persons as passengers,
16 including the driver, which are used to transport pupils to
17 activity events or in emergency situations if the vehicle is
18 operated by an approved employee of the school district.

19 This bill instead excludes from the definition of "school
20 bus" all new or used motor vehicles designed to carry not more
21 than 12 persons as passengers, including the driver, which
22 are used to transport pupils to activity events in which the
23 pupils are participants, or used to transport pupils to their
24 homes in case of illness or other emergency situations. The
25 bill makes corresponding changes to related provisions in Code
26 section 321.373. In accordance with current law, the vehicles
27 must be operated by employees of the school district who are
28 specifically approved by the local superintendent of schools
29 for the assignment.

30 Current department of education (DE) administrative rules
31 prohibit the use of ramps on a vehicle operated as a school
32 bus, except when used on the MV-1 purpose-built wheelchair
33 accessible vehicle (281 IAC 44.4(2)(g)).

34 The bill requires DE rules to authorize the use of vehicles
35 modified or manufactured to accommodate wheelchair access with

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1 or without the use of a ramp.