

Senate Transportation Committee

Vivian Hall 271-3091

HB 1758, relative to school bus drivers' certificates.

Hearing Date: April 7, 2026

Time Opened: 1:11 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:19 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Ricciardi, McConkey, Ward, Prentiss and Fenton

Members of the Committee Absent : None

Bill Analysis: This bill provides an alternative path to obtaining a school bus driver's certificate through being currently certified as a school bus driver in the state of Vermont.

Sponsors:

Rep. Oppel
Rep. Damon

Rep. Giasson

Rep. Fracht

Who supports the bill: Representatives Henry Giasson, Hillsborough District 24 and Seth Miller, Strafford District 21; Grant Bosse, Deputy Chief of Staff, New Hampshire Senate; Cory Stone; Pamela Harders; and James Gardner.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: Chris Burke, New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative Henry Giasson

- Rep. Giasson introduced the bill on behalf of Rep. Ulery.
- Designed to increase number of bus drivers.
- Talked about other legislation in neighboring states.
- Talked about trying to go much larger as long their training programs were similar. Increasing the number of bus drivers and students.
- They would need to pass a background check.

Senator Fenton asked if the schools pay bus drivers or third parties.

Rep. Giasson said he did not know.

Rep. Seth Miller, Strafford, District 21

- Rep. Miller said that this bill ensures the people we are recruiting from other states are properly qualified and trained.
- He said that solving the problem of sufficient bus drivers and this would be a good idea.

Senator Ward asked how short on bus drivers we are.

Rep. Miller said the shortage is dire. Routes take twice as long as they should. Students are getting to school and home.

Senator Prentiss commented that this issue is a serious concern in her district and emphasized that cross-border reciprocity with Vermont allows school bus drivers to work where they choose rather than constituting “poaching.” She also noted that ongoing school bus driver shortages are common and visible in her community.

Rep. Miller said he is not concerned about Vermont requiring additional training for New Hampshire drivers and views it positively, stating that it could discourage local drivers from leaving and potentially encourage more drivers to come into New Hampshire instead.

Grant Bosse, Deputy Chief of Staff, New Hampshire Senate

- Mr. Bosse is working with the committee to amend the bill to expand beyond Vermont to include other states such as Massachusetts and Maine.
- He said the DMV director should have authority to evaluate whether other states’ school bus driver standards meet New Hampshire’s requirements, rather than granting blanket reciprocity.
- He emphasized the goal is not to weaken standards but to recognize equivalent certification and maintain safety.
- He stated the change would streamline hiring qualified out-of-state drivers to help address school bus driver shortages, particularly in interstate school districts.

Neutral Information Presented:

Chris Burke, Pupil Transportation Coordinator, New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles

- Mr. Burke and Director Marasco reviewed the bill and supported allowing the director to evaluate out-of-state school bus driver credentialing standards.

- He stated this change would help determine whether other states meet or exceed New Hampshire requirements and streamline on boarding for qualified out-of-state drivers.
- Mr. Burke explained that the current New Hampshire process for issuing school bus driver certificates, including application submission, motor vehicle and criminal background checks, required training, testing, and issuance of credentials tied to license expiration.
- He noted that drivers must complete 10 hours of pre-service instruction and pass a 25-question DMV exam to be certified.
- He stated certified drivers must also complete 8 hours of annual in-service training to maintain certification.
- He reported current numbers of out-of-state holders of New Hampshire school bus certificates, including higher concentrations in Massachusetts (108), Vermont (39), Maine (23), and smaller numbers across several other states.

V.H

Date Hearing Report completed: April 10, 2026