



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon



Kids need clean air to stay healthy. Retrofitting and replacing diesel school buses can greatly reduce kids exposure to harmful diesel fumes. And these investments save dollars by cutting health costs and reducing lost learning potential.

HB 2795 Removes Unintentional but Toxic Fumes from Kids' Ride on the Bus

HB 2795 protects children from diesel exhaust by:

- Requiring all 1994-2006 diesel school buses in Oregon to be retrofitted with filters by 2017
- Requiring that all pre-1994 diesel school buses in Oregon are replaced with cleaner buses by 2025

The Diesel Bus Problem

Currently there are more than 3,700 diesel-powered school buses in Oregon; approximately 70% of these buses are unnecessarily emitting hazardous diesel exhaust. Diesel exhaust exposure is especially high for children who ride buses. Diesel emissions can enter buses through a hole in the crankcase or through tailpipe emissions. Concentrations of diesel particulate matter and air toxics inside buses are 4 to 12 times higher than ambient pollution levels. School buses may account for more than 30% of a child's diesel pollution exposures.

Diesel exhaust is a respiratory irritant and can lead to wheezing, difficulty breathing, eye and throat irritation, and asthma attacks. Children are the most susceptible to the impacts of diesel exhaust because their lungs and bodies are still developing. Asthma related illnesses are the number one cause of school absenteeism in the U.S. The asthma rate among Oregon children is an astounding 8.5% (close to 73,000 children).

Reducing Diesel Emissions Improves Children's Health and Learning

When school districts in Washington state retrofitted their buses, they documented a 23-31% reduction in children hospital admissions due to asthma or bronchitis post-retrofit as compared to pre-retrofit years. These school districts also experienced a 36-39% reduction in pneumonia and pleurisy cases following retrofitting.

Children suffering from asthma not only cope with daily health challenges, but many studies have shown that children with asthma have higher school absenteeism, which could translate into poorer performance in school.

The Cost of Inaction

Diesel fumes exact a price on children, and also exact a cost to society. According to OEC's 2008 *Price of Pollution* report, childhood asthma costs Oregonians \$27.7 million a year in direct and indirect health care costs. Based on these estimates, a 23% statewide decrease in asthma-related health care costs translates into a savings of more than \$5 million/year.

Even without considering the cost of suffering or calculating potential benefits to adults with chronic conditions, the Washington state study estimated that retrofitting school buses present a benefit-cost ratio of more than 20:1.

Reducing diesel emissions from school buses represents one of the most important opportunities to achieve rapid and cost-effective health and environmental benefits in Oregon.

Making Buses Healthier is Possible

Many school districts in Oregon are already aggressively retrofitting or replacing their school bus fleets. Salem-Keizer, Beaverton, David Douglas, Centennial, Hillsboro and Sherwood school districts currently have grants that will cover most, if not all of their retrofit needs. Gresham-Barlow, Tigard-Tualatin, West Linn and Medford contract for bus service from First Student School Bus Transportation Service, a national company that has committed to retrofitting its fleet.

Despite this progress, there are still many school buses throughout the state that need to be retrofitted or replaced: 252 diesel school buses in Oregon need to be replaced and approximately 2500 remain to be retrofitted. There are a variety of sources to help schools facilitate the needed fixes including state and federal grant programs and supplemental environmental project funds. The timeframe outlined in HB 2795 enables schools the opportunity to identify funding sources while ensuring that retrofitting or replacing the current fleet of diesel buses is a priority.

*Passage of **HB 2795** will ensure a uniform standard across Oregon to clean up all diesel school buses, resulting in better health for all Oregonians, especially our children.*

Supporters of HB 2795

Activistas

AFSCME-Local 3214

AFT-Oregon

American Lung Association in Oregon

Children First for Oregon

Community Health Partnership

Healthy Kids Learn Better Coalition

Nurse Practitioners of Oregon

Oregon Center for Environmental Health

Oregon Environmental Council

Oregon Nurses Association

Oregon Public Health Association

Oregon School Employees Association

(OSEA)

Oregon Toxics Alliance

Physicians for Social Responsibility, OR

Project: Children

SEIU-Local 503

Urban Mommas



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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