

Energy and Technology Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: HB-5470 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING HYBRID SCHOOL BUSES.

Vote Date: 3/19/2026

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 3/12/2026

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Energy and Technology Committee

CO-SPONSORS OF BILL:

[Rep. Joseph P. Gresko, 121st Dist.](#)

[Rep. Mitch Bolinsky, 106th Dist.](#)

[Rep. Tracy Marra, 141st Dist.](#)

REASONS FOR BILL:

To provide low-emission alternative options, in meeting the 2040 school bus fleet electrification deadline, such as hybrid and propane, in an attempt to allow flexibility to municipalities due to the high cost associated with electric school buses.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie Dykes, Commissioner, DEEP

DEEP opposes the transition of Connecticut's school bus fleet to zero-emission, alternatively fueled, or plug-in hybrid by 2040. This bill would also make these school buses eligible for state grant programs initially designed to support electric buses. Full battery electric vehicles provide better air quality in addition to their public health benefits. The Department has additional concerns with allowing the wider use of plug-in hybrid options as this technology has been largely superseded by fully electric options due to advancement in battery technology. While DEEP has some concerns with this legislation, we are supportive of the ongoing legislative efforts to provide flexibility to municipalities regarding timing.

CT Green Bank

CT Green Bank supports this bill as electrifying school buses has important public health benefits. Many environmental justice communities are experiencing disproportionately higher asthma rates, including higher rates of asthma-related hospital visits. A recent study has shown that a single diesel school bus can generate tens of thousands of dollars in public health benefits. Green Bank looks forward to continuing to work with the legislature, DEEP, school districts, and transportation providers to progress the transition of Connecticut's school bus fleets to cleaner alternatives.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Leslie Anderson, President and CEO, PGANE

We support this bill as after 2040, propane will be one of the alternate fuels that a bus fleet owner can use. This is a much more affordable option as it would be more expensive to purchase electric school buses and the infrastructure needed to maintain them.

Jean Cronin, Executive Director, COSTA

The current law mandating school districts to replace their bus fleets with zero-emission alternatives is ambitious. However, this bill sensibly extends the deadline and allows for alternative fuels. The policy makes sense as environmental justice communities, which have larger fleets, also tend to have tighter budgets. Funding, infrastructure, and power resources have been the biggest hurdles for municipalities.

Adam Gauvin, Public Policy Specialist, Global Partners LP

It is important that school districts are allowed the flexibility to choose which lower-emission bus technology they use as they adhere to the state's vision of more sustainable school bus fleets. This method may also protect taxpayers from the higher costs that may come with obtaining certain models, and the infrastructure required for them, as school districts are not being as limited in their options of what they can purchase. This flexibility will be especially helpful to districts with limited budgets. It also protects districts from issues that may arise in the market or the supply chain.

Mike Morrissey, Director GOVT, Alternate Fuels Coalition of CT

We are in support of HB5470 as propane powered vehicles are an effective low-cost alternative to diesel power vehicles. While typically they have not required grant funding, this bill allows them to be eligible for these grants, allowing for their advancement in the marketplace. By allowing for their use beyond 2040, it allows distressed communities a more affordable option.

Christian Herb, President, CT Energy Marketers Association

We support this bill as it would provide alternate fuel options for school bus fleets, relieving districts of the high costs associated with electric school buses, while remaining consistent with the Global Warming Solutions Act.

Stephen Sack, President, Sack Energy

Sack Energy expressed support for this bill and provided a bulleted list of reasons for support that included the cost towns would endure, the emissions that come from generating electricity, the jobs created from the production of biodiesel, and the ease in implementing biofuel.

Susan Eastwood

This is a wise addition to the current law as it would allow districts to count hybrid school buses toward the fleet percentage required. This is a stronger solution than repealing the law as proposed in bills HB5464 and SB416. Diesel emissions create both an environmental and public health risk. My youngest daughter has asthma that was caused by the pollution coming from her diesel school bus. Today, older school buses should be replaced with cleaner technology to protect against the risk that comes with them. However, this bill could be stronger if it created additional financial help for small and rural towns.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Samantha Dynowski, State Director, Sierra Club

While we understand that many school districts have expressed concerns about meeting the current electrification deadline, and federal rollbacks have hurt financial support, Connecticut should offer solutions rather than repeal the law. In addition, Green Bank has done extensive work providing technical and financial support for districts that need help. The Sierra Club recommends a focus on pathways that will help school districts transition to cleaner and healthier school buses, not repeal the law.

Charles Rothenberger, Director of Government Relations, Save the Sound

Alex Rodriguez, Environmental Justice Specialist, Save the Sound

Zero-emission school buses are essential to reducing pollution and protecting air quality. Weakening our transportation standards will only increase pollution, create public health risks, and impede our ability to meet the goals laid out in the Global Warming Solutions Act. We oppose the change to section 1, allowing for alternate fuels, because they still rely on fossil fuels. They are not adequate substitutes for electric school buses, which produce the best air quality and maintain the best public health benefits. Save the Sound recognizes the very real funding issues that district's face with the electrification process, which is why we are in support of HB5153 and SB416.

Paul Brenton, Superintendent, Plainfield Public Schools

While I support the state's mission for a cleaner, more sustainable future for student transportation, this bill needs to be adjusted to consider the needs of all districts. I support the bill's abandonment a "one-size-fits-all" approach to allowing a mix of electric and hybrid options. My primary concern is the readiness of the infrastructure that will be necessary to make this change. With uncertainty surrounding federal EPA funding, it is immensely critical that Connecticut provides a stable roadmap for long-term success. A 2040 deadline does not provide enough time for districts to accommodate the necessary infrastructure.

Joseph Sokolovic, Vice Chair, Bridgeport Board of Education

The majority of school districts do not own or operate their own school buses, private companies do. There is concern that these private companies will purchase these buses, the districts will pay for them indirectly, and will not have any control. Costs associated with this will be passed to the consumer. Grants and federal funding will not solve the problem. Towns trying to make up these costs will have to raise taxes or cut educational services.

Rachel Briggs, Staff Attorney, Conservation Law Foundation

While it is important to transition school buses to zero-emissions, changing the requirement to prioritize environmental justice communities could create confusion. Electric buses

additionally have significantly smaller lifecycle emissions than the natural gas and diesel-hybrid options. While the CLF is understanding towards the challenges of electrifying school bus fleets, moving the target backwards is not the answer.

Peter Cyr, Program Manager, CTC

The CTC believes that the definition of a hybrid bus is unclear and doesn't create a meaningful minimum threshold for electric operations or account for the different emission outputs of fuels. We also oppose changing the years from 2035 to 2040 and removing the call for zero-emission buses as it would contradict the committee's commitment to cleaner air and reducing emissions. Lastly, the CTC feels any language regarding electric buses should also include naming them energy storage providers to help reduce electricity costs at peak hours over the summer.

Sherri DiNello, Director of Business, CASBO

Our organization worked with Connecticut Green Bank to potentially extend the timeline for school districts to transition to zero-emission school buses as the current timeline is unattainable. We are open to ideas for reducing the carbon emissions, but additional funding is needed, thus we request changing the timeline in this legislation to mirror SB416.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

House Republicans Caucus

While this bill makes good progress, we feel that Section 13 of Public Act 22-25 should be repealed. The 2030 mandate is concerning, considering that the EJ communities are mostly made up of distressed municipalities and the cost of electrifying a school bus fleet has been a hurdle. We are also hearing that the new 2040 deadline is not attainable for other districts due to the costs that come with upgrading as well. If the entire electric school bus fleet requirement is not walked back, it will require more than 10,000 school buses to be electrified, placing a massive strain on an already vulnerable power grid.

Samuel Gold, Executive Director, River COG

A major limitation in the switch to an electric bus fleet is the infrastructure needed to charge them. There would need to be coordination with Eversource as certain districts do not have the capacity to charge during peak demand. Considering the high cost of electric buses, we recommend creating a stronger electrical infrastructure before imposing mandates and that the efficiency of existing buses is improved in the meantime. We further recommend an upgrade to the current system of busing children and consider adapting a similar approach to that of MicroTransit to ensure the highest efficiency of our fleets and resources.

Sally Keating, Superintendent, Lisbon Public Schools

Due to the high costs associated with Transportation, the use of a hybrid-bus, if they have no negative impact, could be beneficial to the implementation of this bill. With already strained school budgets, funding as well as sufficient lead time and more policy details will be incredibly beneficial to carrying out the requirements of this bill.

Reported by: Samuel Erickson

Date: April 2nd, 2026