

EDUCATION

NJ bill would require cameras on school buses to protect students with disabilities



Gene Myers

NorthJersey.com

Updated June 30, 2025, 5:54 p.m. ET

The New Jersey state Senate voted unanimously on June 30 to put protections in place for [students with disabilities on school buses](#) after a trio of deadly incidents in recent years.

The legislation, [S3858](#), would require school bus drivers, aides and other personnel transporting "students with disabilities who have special transportation requirements" to call 911 in potential life-threatening emergencies. It also would mandate GPS tracking of school buses and requires interior cameras on buses.

"Today's vote by the Senate is a big, important step forward, one that could help ensure the safety and well-being of thousands of New Jersey students with disabilities," the state's disability ombudsman, Paul Aronsohn, said after the vote.

The bill must still pass the state Assembly and get Gov. Phil Murphy's signature to become law. A companion measure in the Assembly, [A5142](#), has yet to get a vote.

The Senate measure, cosponsored by Sen. Anthony Bucco, R-Morris, and Sen. Patrick Diegnan, D-Middlesex, followed years of advocacy by those who have endured losses, including the Rossi family of East Hanover, whose son Matthew died in 2023 after he was found [unresponsive on his school bus](#).

"We're grateful for everyone's support and for progress in improving the lives of students with disabilities so that Matthew's death will not have been in vain," said his mother, Anabela Rossi.

Matthew, who had muscular dystrophy and autism, died after a bus ride home from school. His family has sued the bus contractor and the employer of a nurse and school aide who were on the bus, saying those staff members failed to respond when Matthew choked on his own mucus.

The family has been lobbying for safety protocols on buses so caregivers don't hesitate when a child is in crisis.

"No parent should have to endure the loss of a child," Rossi said after the vote. "This bill represents that all personnel are responsible. There's no room for finger pointing. Everyone is part of ensuring the safety."

She emphasized that the bill focuses on "the most vulnerable" students, who are often transported out of their home school districts by private bus companies. Matthew was returning from a school for students with disabilities in Oakland.

His death followed other school bus incidents in New Jersey, including that of 6-year-old [Fajr Atiya Williams](#), who also died in 2023 after her wheelchair harness tightened around her neck. The bus aide assigned to her was later convicted of endangering her welfare.

In 2022, Landon Goff, a 16-year-old from Cape May County, died after choking on his saliva during a 40-minute school bus ride, despite the presence of an aide.

In Rossi's case, Morris County prosecutors also brought charges against Emilio Rivera, the nurse who accompanied Matthew on the bus. The Carlstadt man surrendered his license and faced a recommended 90-day jail sentence and probation as part of a plea agreement announced earlier this year.

The companion Assembly bill was introduced in December 2024, sponsored by Assembly members Al Barlas, R-Gloucester, Michael Venezia, D-Atlantic, and Shama Haider, D-Bergen. It has yet to be scheduled for a hearing or advance to a full Assembly vote.

"This is a wake-up call," Rossi said of the legislation.