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## USE OF SCHOOL BUS FOR TRANSPORTATION OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

House Bill 4879 as introduced  
First Analysis (6-12-01)

Sponsor: Rep. Cameron Brown  
Committee: Agriculture and Resource  
Management

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

Some types of agricultural work are performed predominantly by teenagers during their summer vacation from school. Although many of the workers are too young to drive, they often ride to work with others who may only be a couple of years older than they are. According to committee testimony, the place of employment is sometimes up to forty miles from the workers' homes, making safe transportation a very serious issue for employees, their families, and their employers. Having so many youngsters traveling in separate cars does not alleviate many anxieties.

One way to help ensure the safety of agricultural workers is to bus them from their homes, or a location reasonably close to their homes, to the workplace. Given that much of the agricultural work is performed during the summer, school buses, which are not being used to transport students to school, might seem to be one reasonable option. However, the Pupil Transportation Act defines "school bus" to mean "a motor vehicle . . . with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of 11 or more passengers used for the transportation of school pupils to and from school . . .". With a few specific exceptions, e.g. for senior citizens, retired, disabled persons, or members of nonprofit organizations, school buses may only be used for transporting students to and from school.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

Currently the Pupil Transportation Act requires school buses to be painted to certain specifications (including, among others, requirements that the body, cowl, hood, and fenders be painted "national school bus chrome yellow", and that the bumper, trim, wheels, and lettering be painted black). In addition, the act prohibits painting buses other than school buses in these colors and in that design.

House Bill 4879 would make an exception to that prohibition. Specifically, it would allow a bus leased seasonally to transport agricultural workers to and from a field for agricultural operations to be painted in the manner of a school bus. This would allow a school bus to be leased for the purpose of transporting agricultural workers.

MCL 257.1833

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

Fiscal information is not available.

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Some types of agricultural work are performed predominantly by teenagers working long, hot summer days. Those who are able to drive themselves and their co-workers to and from work may not have had much driving experience because of their age. The combination of fatigue and lack of driving experience creates hazardous road conditions for the workers and other drivers. Therefore, it makes sense to provide some sort of mass transportation for the workers. Public transportation is not an option in many of these rural areas. Although purchasing a bus is an option, it is quite expensive for an employer who only needs the buses for several weeks year. Allowing employers to lease school buses from a leasing company would encourage them to provide mass transportation for their workers in a cost-effective manner. (According to committee testimony, buses owned by school districts could not be leased for this purpose; rather, the bill is aimed at private companies that own buses that are leased by school districts.) School buses are not used much during the summer anyway, given the restrictions on their lawful use. Finally, a driver would be required to have a commercial driver's

House Bill 4879 (6-12-01)

license and would have to follow laws regulating the operation of a commercial vehicle.

***POSITIONS:***

The Michigan Agri-Business Association supports the bill. (6-7-01)

The Michigan Farm Bureau supports the bill. (6-7-01)

The Michigan State Police has no official position on the bill. (6-7-01)

Analyst: J. Caver

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.