

School bus safety bill focused on special education students clears NJ Senate



Gene Myers

NorthJersey.com

Published 6:04 p.m. ET March 24, 2025 | Updated 7:37 p.m. ET March 24, 2025

Key Points AI-assisted summary

- The New Jersey Senate unanimously approved the creation of a task force to recommend reforms for special education transportation safety.
 - The bill comes after recent deaths and safety complaints involving students with disabilities on school buses.
-

For the second time in a week, New Jersey lawmakers pushed forward legislation aimed at increasing [school bus safety](#) for students with disabilities.

The state Senate on Monday unanimously approved [S-3447](#), a bill that would create a 22-member Special Education Transportation Task Force to study reforms.

The vote follows a trio of deaths and other safety complaints involving [special-education students](#) commuting to and from school in New Jersey, and it comes a week after a Senate committee advanced a separate measure to require video cameras and GPS tracking on buses that transport disabled students.

Monday's legislation, approved by a 39-0 vote, is sponsored by Sens. Kristin Corrado, a Passaic County Republican, and Patrick Diegnan, a Democrat from Middlesex County. It would create a panel of parents, educators, state officials and advocates who will have one year to examine a system that disability groups say is failing New Jersey students and to come up with recommendations for improvements.

“Today’s vote represents a big, important step forward in our effort to ensure the safety of students with disabilities. Among other things, this task force would provide a platform for a much-needed conversation about special education transportation — a conversation that should be student-centered and family-driven,” said Paul Aronsohn, the state’s ombudsman for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Among other subjects, the task force would examine the training that school bus drivers and aides receive and how they handle emergency situations. It also would study whether the education plans drafted for students with disabilities adequately lay out their transportation needs.

This legislation follows deaths such as that of [East Hanover’s Matthew Rossi](#), a 19-year-old with muscular dystrophy and autism, who was put on a school bus in 2023 and returned home unresponsive. Rossi was pronounced dead at his home soon after that ride. His family spoke out about the tragedy in an effort to spark a public debate on accountability and safety.

"I am pleased that the state Senate unanimously passed this bill, which supports our family’s core mission of prioritizing the personal safety of our most vulnerable students during transport to and from school, including their unique medical and behavioral needs," Matthew's mother, Anabela Rossi, said in an email.

The legislation also "aims to establish greater accountability for the local school boards," she said. "We are grateful to Senators Corrado and Diegnan for their sponsorship on this bill and commitment to this issue."

Groups like Disability Rights New Jersey and the New Jersey Education Association, which represents special education teachers, would also have a seat at the table on the new task force.

An identical version of the legislation, Assembly bill 4607, will need to pass that chamber before it heads to the governor’s desk for a signature.

