



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Calls on Assembly to Pass Law Requiring Criminal Background Checks for Bus Drivers Following Ntsb Report

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Following a new National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) report which calls for more comprehensive driver history checks of bus drivers, New York State Transportation Committee Chairman Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) called on the New York State Assembly to pass legislation that would require criminal background checks for bus drivers. The legislation, which Senator Fuschillo sponsors, was approved by the New York State Senate in January.

The NTSB's report examined the tragic March 12, 2011 Bronx bus crash which killed 15 people. The driver of that bus, Ophadell Williams, had prior convictions for manslaughter, grand larceny, and driving without a license. His driver's license was

suspended following the crash after evidence surfaced that he made false statements on his application form. Stronger background check requirements for drivers were among the recommendations included within the report.

“The NTSB’s report is just the latest reminder about why we need stronger laws to protect bus passengers. Waiting for another tragedy before acting is a backwards approach; we should act to prevent another tragedy. It’s long past time to approve this commonsense measure to save lives, improve safety, and prevent unfit, unqualified bus drivers from getting behind the wheel. The Assembly should join the Senate and pass this legislation immediately,” said Senator Fuschillo.

The legislation (S5171B) would require criminal background checks for all bus drivers and help prevent them from using aliases or false names to hide criminal offenses that would disqualify them from holding a license. The New York State Inspector General recommended requiring criminal background checks for all bus drivers in a September 2011 report investigating licensing and oversight of commercial bus drivers following the March 12, 2011 Bronx bus crash.

Following the Bronx bus crash last March, at least 530 drivers and 460 vehicles were removed from the road by the New York State Department of Transportation through roadside inspections. Several other New York based bus companies were recently shut down by the U.S. Department of Transportation for extensive safety violations.