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House Bill 4879 (as reported without amendment)  
Sponsor: Representative Cameron Brown  
House Committee: Transportation  
Senate Committee: Transportation and Tourism

Date Completed: 10-2-01

### **RATIONALE**

In parts of Michigan, some agricultural work is performed primarily by teenagers during the summer. Many of these workers are too young to drive, live far from the worksite, or do not have access to cars. Transportation to and from work therefore can be problematic for the teenage workers, their families, and their employers. Using school buses to transport farm workers could be a solution, since many buses sit idle in the summer. The Pupil Transportation Act, however, generally does not allow a vehicle painted as a school bus to be used for purposes other than transporting pupils to and from school. In order to enable workers without transportation to reach the fields, some people feel that agricultural companies should be allowed to lease school buses.

### **CONTENT**

The bill would amend the Pupil Transportation Act to permit a bus to be painted as a school bus if it were leased seasonally for transporting agricultural workers to and from a field for agricultural operations. The Act requires school buses to be painted in a certain manner and prohibits a bus, other than a school bus, from being painted in the specified colors and design. The bill would make an exception to that prohibition.

The Act defines "school bus" as "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...".

MCL 257.1833

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate*

*Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

### **Supporting Argument**

Under the Pupil Transportation Act, a school bus must be painted to certain specifications and a bus that is painted as required may not be used except to transport pupils. Under Section 65 of the Act, a *school* may permit its buses to be used to transport individuals who are not students, or to transport people to nonschool-related events, if certain conditions are met. Section 65, however, does not cover situations in which someone other than a school (or a governmental entity under an arrangement with a school) wants to use a school bus. In other words, a company that manufactures school buses or leases them to schools may not lease them to anyone else, such as an agricultural employer.

It seems illogical that farmers wishing to lease a school bus in the summer would have to paint, then repaint the bus in order to comply with the law. Although an agricultural company or farmer could purchase a bus, it is an expensive option for an employer who uses the bus only a few months a year.

Allowing workers to be legally transported to and from agricultural work in a school bus would make transportation more convenient for employers, the employees, and families of employees. More importantly, use of school buses would make transportation safer for the employees. Many of the summer farm workers are young and inexperienced; driving great distances to and from work with other young people could cause a number of accidents.

Legislative Analyst: C. Layman

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: B. Baker

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.