Transportation Committee
JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No: SB-235 / Bill Status / Public Hearing Testimony
Title: AN ACT CONCERNING DRIVER EDUCATION AND STUDENT SAFETY.
Vote Date: 3/16/26
Vote Action: JFS TO THE FLOOR
PH Date: 3/2/2026
File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To allow drivers education students to feel safe while taking a driver's education course by allowing them to choose an instructor of the gender they are most comfortable with. The bill also requires the installation of certain safety measures to ensure student safety while out on the road with a driving instructor due to the unsupervised nature of that style of instruction.

SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):

The language regarding the choice of driving instructor gender was changed from a choice to a request. This change was made as staffing can be unpredictable and a driving school may not have an instructor of a potential student's preferred gender on staff. It does, however, require driving schools to notify students ahead of time if their request cannot be met. If an instructor of a preferred gender is not available at said time, it also allows the student to reschedule without penalty. The substitute language further requires driving schools to self-report safety features such as GPS tracking and audio or video monitoring on their website.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Brandon Dufour, founder and CEO Nest Street Driving School"
We fully respect the intent of the bill but is difficult to recruit qualified instructors. In some areas the pool is very limited and when a female instructor calls out sick, we sometimes must

replace her with a male instructor to avoid cancelling lessons. Many schools operate with only one instructor. A ridged Statutory requirement could create confusion and unintended consequences. Every vehicle in our fleet has three cameras, front, rear, and inside the cabin with audio and GPS tracking. Our system cannot be unplugged or turned off but if a vehicle doesn't have active interned that arid can be tampered with and the footage gone. Rather than isolated mandates we would encourage a broader safety score for driving schools that is published and made available to consumers.

Ann:
As a former drivers ed student I believe this legislation is necessary to promote safety, comfort and accountability where young people are vulnerable. Learning how to drive is stressful and being alone in a car with an unfamiliar adult instructor can add another layer of anxiety. Allowing students to request the gender of their instructor is more about comfort autonomy and safety than discrimination. Driver's education prepares young people to navigate the roads responsibly and it should prioritize student well-being.

Lizabeth Ramirez and John Paul also submitted testimony in support of the bill.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

AAA
Tracey Nobel, Manager, Public and Government Affairs
Alex Statky, Managing Director, Public and Government Affairs
We acknowledge and respect the intent behind the bill but oppose provision (a) as currently written as an unrealistic and operationally impractical burden on driver education providers. Diving schools operate with instructors who may work part-time, rotate between classroom and behind-the wheel instructions. Requiring schools to notify prior to enrollment assumes that staffing availability is fixed and predictable. It would be more reasonable to allow students to request a same-gender instructor at the time of enrollment. Adjustments to provision (a) would preserve student protections and unintended consequences.

Reported by: Pamela Bianca **Date: 3/17/26**