

September 21, 2005

Ms. Irene Cornish
Superintendent of Schools
Stratford Public Schools
1000 East Broadway
Stratford, CT 06615

Dear Ms. Cornish:

On behalf of the Healthy Stratford Council, I would like to take this opportunity to review an important health issue that affects your students, staff and the greater community. In 2002, Public Act 02-56 *An Act Concerning the Idling of School Buses* was signed into law. **This law states that the operator of any school bus shall not operate the engine for more than three consecutive minutes when the school bus is not in motion.** Exceptions to this law are limited to situations where mechanical difficulties, repairs to the vehicle or traffic conditions warrant idling, when idling is necessary to operate safety equipment, when temperatures out of doors are less than twenty degrees F, or when it is necessary to maintain a safe temperature for students with special needs. Violations of Public Act 02-56 are subject to infractions and hefty fines.

The Healthy Stratford Council understands the importance of enforcing the diesel school bus anti-idling law on school grounds. Daily exposure to diesel emissions emitted from idling school buses can result in serious short and long-term health problems. Idling vehicles emit significant amounts of pollution and particulate matter, which contribute to asthma, heart disease, lung damage and possibly cancer. Furthermore, idling wastes fuel and money and causes excessive engine wear. In most cases, buses can maintain a comfortable interior temperature without idling at all.

Connecticut's anti-idling rule is only effective when enforced. We understand that it is difficult to "police" drivers of Stratford's school bus fleet. Therefore, the Healthy Stratford Council recommends taking various approaches to ensuring that the anti-idling law is enforced:

- A copy of this letter sent to bus company with attachment.
- Remind principals of anti-idling law by sending copy of this letter and attachment.
- Utilize school resource officer, parents, staff in enforcing anti-idling law.

The Healthy Stratford Council also realizes that enforcing the anti-idling law is a "temporary" measure to reduce our community's exposure to diesel emissions. We continue to be invested in working with Stratford's Board of Education on establishing a town-wide diesel bus retrofit program, or the equivalent, in the near future. I am attaching a copy of Public Act 02-56. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you in making Stratford a healthier community.

Sincerely,

Ty Sims
Co-Chair, Health Stratford Council 2005-2006

cc: Elaine O'Keefe, Director of Health