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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SCHOOL BUS TRESPASS LEGISLATION PROVES IMPORTANT SAFETY MEASURE IN ESCAMBIA COUNTY AND THROUGHOUT THE STATE

Escambia County, Fla.-- During the 2018 Legislative Session, State Representative Frank White, District 2, and Escambia County School District Superintendent Malcolm Thomas worked together to change the law to better protect children and school employees throughout the state.

Both White and Thomas recognize the significance of the issues we face as a state regarding school safety and the importance of implementing sound, effective policy solutions that make our schools safer.

Prior to the 2018 Legislative Session, Superintendent Thomas expressed his concern over the issue of trespassing on school buses. Because Florida statute did not recognize a bus as school property, school officials and law enforcement were unable to penalize people who unlawfully board a school bus the way they can people who trespass on school grounds.

“As representative, my priority is the safety and welfare of the citizens of Escambia and Santa Rosa counties,” said White. “After learning about the bus trespass problem from Superintendent Thomas, I made it a priority to close the loophole in the law that prevented law enforcement from adequately protecting our students and school employees.”

Representative White was able to add language to a 2018 education bill (HB 495) that defines a school bus as “school property,” which makes trespassing on school buses equivalent to trespassing on school grounds—freeing up school districts and law enforcement to take immediate action in trespass incidents on school buses.

"This is important language, which further enhances the safety of our students while in our care. Whether on a school bus or on school grounds, the safety and security should be the same," said Superintendent Thomas. "Entering a school bus unlawfully will have the same ramifications as trespassing on school grounds. It will be considered a crime."

School districts statewide have benefited, and will continue to benefit, from the new trespass policy that originated in Escambia County.

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