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Dear Members of the Greater Ellsworth Community,

We have been deeply saddened by the two recent tragedies in which two students in other districts were involved in fatal accidents by school buses before the holidays. Our hearts go out to the families, classmates, staff members, and communities affected by these devastating losses. While these incidents did not occur in our community, they serve as a sobering reminder that student transportation safety requires constant attention, shared responsibility, and collective care.

Locally, our bus and van drivers have reported an increasing number of incidents in which motorists are not following school bus safety laws—most concerning, drivers failing to stop for red flashing lights or passing buses before it is safe to do so. These actions place students at serious risk and create heightened stress for our drivers, families, and children.

Our transportation staff take their responsibility to students seriously. Each day, they navigate busy roadways, varying weather conditions, and tight schedules—all while ensuring the safety of the children entrusted to their care. When drivers fail to follow established safety laws, it undermines this work and places lives in danger.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) provides clear guidance to support the highest standards of school bus safety. While these expectations are regularly reinforced with our transportation team, they must also be supported by all members of our community. In particular, we ask everyone to remain mindful of the following:

- Motorists must stop when a school bus has red flashing lights activated—regardless of direction of travel, unless on a divided roadway.
- Extra caution is essential during morning and afternoon hours when students are boarding and exiting buses.
- Students should only cross the road in front of the bus and only when directed to do so by the driver.
- School zones and bus stops are shared safety spaces, requiring patience, reduced speeds, and full attention.

We are asking for your help. Protecting students cannot rest solely on bus drivers or schools—it requires the active cooperation of drivers, families, neighbors, and community members. Please talk with teen

drivers and family members about school bus laws. Slow down, put distractions aside, and allow extra time during school commute hours.

Most importantly, we ask that our community show respect and support for the professionals who transport our children every day. A moment of patience can prevent a lifetime of loss.

Thank you for partnering with us to keep Ellsworth students safe. Together, through awareness, accountability, and care for one another, we can ensure that every child arrives at school and home safely.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Amy J Boles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Amy" being more prominent than the last name "Boles".

Amy J Boles
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