

§ 115C-42. Liability insurance and immunity.

Any local board of education, by securing liability insurance as hereinafter provided, is hereby authorized and empowered to waive its governmental immunity from liability for damage by reason of death or injury to person or property caused by the negligence or tort of any agent or employee of such board of education when acting within the scope of his authority or within the course of his employment. Such immunity shall be deemed to have been waived by the act of obtaining such insurance, but such immunity is waived only to the extent that said board of education is indemnified by insurance for such negligence or tort.

Any contract of insurance purchased pursuant to this section shall be issued by a company or corporation duly licensed and authorized to execute insurance contracts in this State or by a qualified insurer as determined by the Department of Insurance and shall by its terms adequately insure the local board of education against liability for damages by reason of death or injury to person or property proximately caused by the negligent act or torts of the agents and employees of said board of education or the agents and employees of a particular school in a local administrative unit when acting within the scope of their authority. The local board of education shall determine what liabilities and what officers, agents and employees shall be covered by any insurance purchased pursuant to this section. Any company or corporation which enters into a contract of insurance as above described with a local board of education, by such act waives any defense based upon the governmental immunity of such local board of education.

Every local board of education in this State is authorized and empowered to pay as a necessary expense the lawful premiums for such insurance.

Any person sustaining damages, or in case of death, his personal representative may sue a local board of education insured under this section for the recovery of such damages in any court of competent jurisdiction in this State, but only in the county of such board of education; and it shall be no defense to any such action that the negligence or tort complained of was in pursuance of governmental, municipal or discretionary function of such local board of education if, and to the extent, such local board of education has insurance coverage as provided by this section.

Except as hereinbefore expressly provided, nothing in this section shall be construed to deprive any local board of education of any defense whatsoever to any such action for damages or to restrict, limit, or otherwise affect any such defense which said board of education may have at common law or by virtue of any statute; and nothing in this section shall be construed to relieve any person sustaining damages or any personal representative of any decedent from any duty to give notice of such claim to said local board of education or to commence any civil action for the recovery of damages within the applicable period of time prescribed or limited by statute.

A local board of education may incur liability pursuant to this section only with respect to a claim arising after such board of education has procured liability insurance pursuant to this section and during the time when such insurance is in force.

No part of the pleadings which relate to or allege facts as to a defendant's insurance against liability shall be read or mentioned in the presence of the trial jury in any action brought pursuant to this section. Such liability shall not attach unless the plaintiff shall waive the right to have all issues of law or fact relating to insurance in such an action determined by a jury and such issues shall be heard and determined by the judge without resort to a jury and the jury shall be absent during any motions, arguments, testimony or announcement of findings of fact or conclusions of law with respect thereto unless the defendant shall request a jury trial thereon: Provided, that this section shall not apply to claims for damages caused by the negligent acts or torts of public school bus, or school transportation service vehicle drivers,

while driving school buses and school transportation service vehicles when the operation of such school buses and service vehicles is paid from the State Public School Fund. (1955, c. 1256; 1957, c. 685; 1959, c. 573, s. 2; 1961, c. 1102, s. 4; 1977, 2nd Sess., c. 1280, s. 3; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985, c. 527.)