

April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

**Re: New York School Bus Industry**

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We are writing this letter on behalf of a coalition of Unions representing over 125,000 drivers, matrons and mechanics employed by school bus contractors and school districts in New York State. Together, we are responsible for safely transporting over 2.3 million students, who ride a yellow school bus to school each day in New York.

During this Coronavirus outbreak, you have rightly issued an executive order closing schools, now through April 15. While the schools are closed, there must be continuity of funding for pupil transportation. In your executive order, you indicated that the 180-school day requirement is waived in order for a school district to maintain state aid. However, school districts and their attorneys do not feel that this is enough to guarantee that NYS will hold them harmless for continuing pupil transportation payments. As a result, currently 50% of New York's school districts are still paying their transportation service providers and 50% are not.

Our understanding is that the school districts have agreed to continue to pay their pupil transportation contracts so long as the State Education Department maintains state aid to the districts. Continuing funding is in the best interests of the school districts, the workers and the families we serve. Our industry is already facing a worker shortage, and if these workers are not paid, and are instead laid off, which is already happening, they may not return to work when the schools reopen. For your reference, we have attached links to several articles detailing this phenomenon at the end of this letter.

The lack of clarity or uniform guidance from NYSED to school districts on this specific issue has caused a disparate effect across New York State and an unfair outcome for those individuals who happen to work for a school district that has unilaterally decided to no longer fund pupil transportation services. The ability to resume school operations cannot happen at a moment's notice, and it is imperative that pupil transportation contracts still be paid so that the school bus industry is ready to go as soon this crisis passes.

Even while not providing daily transportation services, our drivers, matrons and mechanics remain at the ready and on call as needed. This uneven interpretation of the current executive order requires that the State Education Department provide uniform guidance and the pupil transportation industry must be treated as a whole. Otherwise, whenever school does start up again, New York will have half of its school districts ready for the first day back and the other half will not be.

We urge you to please take action that will provide certainty to these school districts that their education aid will continue so that they can pay their school bus workers and contractors. Given the unknown length of this crisis, continuing payment during COVID-19 school closures is necessary in order to maintain a sound student transportation infrastructure that can immediately restart after the unprecedented interruption.

Year after year our members safely transport those children to and from school every day. Now is the time to secure the experienced workforce by keeping them employed, paying their wages and continuing

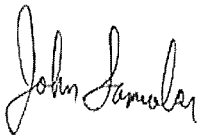
their medical benefits so that when this is over, we can quickly get back to work with the professional drivers, attendants and mechanics who have the experience that our children deserve.

It is imperative that the State Education Department direct the School Districts to pay per the terms of their pupil transportation contracts, otherwise the school-bus transportation system will be decimated. That crucial funding means experienced, trusted bus drivers, mechanics and bus drivers' aides can continue to receive paychecks, be on call as needed, and quickly return to work when schools reopen.

Student transportation remains the backbone of the educational system, and this important industry must be protected until this health crisis dissipates. We urge you to have the State Education Department issue a directive to all school districts requiring the payment of these contracts or to issue an Executive Order that ensures that the funding stream will remain in place to maintain the workforce in the school bus industry.

Thank you for your consideration on this critical request, as the safety of our children is our highest priority.

Sincerely,



John Samuelson  
TWU International President



John Durso  
President, Long Island Federation of Labor



Tony Utano  
President, TWU Local 100



Daniel DeCrotic  
President, Teamsters Local 1205



Michael Cordiello  
President, ATU Local 1181



Debra Hagan  
President, TWU Local 252



Peter Scalzo  
Business mgr./ Financial Sec., Local 91 United Crafts and Industries Workers

Articles for reference:

- (1) <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/on-air/as-seen-on/long-island-bus-drivers-facing-layoffs/2357212/>
- (2) <https://abc7ny.com/school-bus-layoffs-coronavirus-long-island-new-york-ny/6066325/>
- (3) <https://www.newsday.com/news/health/coronavirus/bus-drivers-laid-off-1.43547464>
- (4) <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/westchester/2020/03/27/school-aid-peril-april-1-deadline-looms-falling-revenues/2928240001/>