

New York School Bus Contractors Association

Testimony
Joint Legislative Hearing on Education
2018-2019 Executive Budget
Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room B, State Street, Albany

Our Priorities...

Safely Transporting School Children
Protecting our Labor Force
Helping School Districts Manage Transportation Costs

Bree Allen, President

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nysbca.com
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Good afternoon.

My name is Bree Allen; I am the Regional Manager for Ethan Allen Transportation in Kingston, NY and newly elected President of the New York School Bus Contractors Association.

I want to thank all the members of the joint committee on education for affording the New York School Bus Contractors Association the opportunity to present an overview of our 2018-2019 budget recommendations.

The New York School Bus Contractors Association is an organization whose members transport nearly 60% of the 2.7 million children riding a yellow school bus in New York each day. Our public-private partnership helps school districts and the State of New York **save over \$200 million each year** -- money that is used in our classrooms.

We appreciate the positive working relationship we have with the legislature, Governor, the school districts we serve and the over 50,000 professionals who work to make sure every student is provided a safe ride to and from school.

This year, we are recommending the legislature once again include a sales tax exemption for school buses and related items used for pupil transportation in the 2018-2019 executive budget. The Assembly and Senate have both passed the sales tax exemption for school buses in previous budgets and we appreciate your support.

As you have heard us say in the past, exempting school buses from the sales tax means school districts and the state of New York will no longer pay the sales tax as a portion of the pupil transportation contracts between school bus contractors and school districts.

The exemption will save over \$7 million and allow the State of New York to put that money where it belongs – back into the classroom.

The Governor's executive budget includes increasing penalties for illegally passing a school bus; this is something we have actively supported for the better part of a decade.

In addition, we would recommend driver education surrounding school bus safety. For example, Assemblywoman Rosenthal and Senator Phillips have a bill that would educate New York Drivers about the dangers of illegally passing a school bus by requiring a school bus safety component to the pre-licensing written test given by the Department of Motor

Vehicles and mandate that there be at least one question pertaining to school bus safety. **Our industry works tirelessly to educate drivers on the dangers of illegally passing a school bus, it is clear that we as a state need to do even more.**

The Governor is also calling for the use of automatic-ticketing cameras on school buses, similar to the red-light cameras that have come under scrutiny in New York City and on Long Island for increasing accidents. Our industry currently uses stop-arm cameras, which do not produce automatic tickets, to record and report violations and then work with local law enforcement agencies to increase policing and enforcement in troubled areas.

The concept of automatic-ticketing cameras on school buses might be a logical next step; however, we have numerous safety, labor, liability, insurance, procurement, and cost concerns that would need to be addressed.

The School Bus Contractors Association recommends making improvements to the budget language and should the initiative come to fruition, we recommend a limited pilot program to demonstrate the system's success or failure in addressing the very serious problem of illegally passing a school bus.

Our biggest fear is that these automatic-ticketing cameras actually lead to a tragedy rather than prevent one.

Beyond the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the executive budget also calls for a 2% growth cap on school transportation. While we as an industry work very hard to keep our costs at or below the Consumer Price Index for Urban areas (typically less than 2%) limiting the growth of a school district's transportation budget to below the inflation rate would not be the most prudent means of attaining savings...

...There are years when our contracts with school districts include increases of zero percent, but there are also years when inflation is high, and in these cases, school districts will need the flexibility built into the current funding formulas.

We are here today, **not** asking for an increase in spending for school transportation, instead we are here to provide the Legislature with our professional insights, opinion and to provide smart budget options that will help control spending, **and most of all**, ensure we are able to provide the **safest school transportation services possible**.

Thank you very much for your time today.

We are here to help, so please do not hesitate to call upon us.

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