



**NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION**

NYAPT

Testimony

Joint Legislative Hearing on Education
2026-2027 Executive Budget

Our Priorities

Safely Transporting 2.3+ Million School Children
Addressing the School Bus Driver Shortage
Managing School Transportation Costs

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NYAPT.ORG

January 29, 2026

On behalf of the New York Association for Pupil Transportation membership, thank you for the opportunity to present our recommendations in response to the 2026-27 Executive Budget proposal. We appreciate the legislature's continued commitment to our school districts and student transportation operations.

NYAPT is a professional organization representing school transportation leaders dedicated to safely transporting approximately 2.3 million children on 50,000 school buses each school day in New York State. Our members are committed to providing the safest and most efficient school transportation services possible while managing those costs on behalf of local taxpayers.

With respect to Governor Hochul's 2026 Executive Budget proposal, we offer the following comments.

Transportation Aid

The Governor's Executive Budget preserves the expense-based aid program for school districts, including transportation aid. NYAPT supports the

proposed increase in transportation aid and asks the legislature to support it as well. Transportation aid helps schools and communities fund transportation services, providing a safe, reliable transportation system vital to student success. Studies consistently show that access to school bus transportation boosts student attendance.

NYSED Driver Training Fund

NYAPT supports continued funding of \$400,000 for the State Education Department's school bus driver safety training program. This funding supports the mandated annual safety training for school bus drivers, monitors, and attendants and is the driving force behind our state's enviable school bus safety record. We urge the Legislature's continued support for this funding.

UPK Transportation Aid

The Executive Budget includes a proposal to substantially expand pre-kindergarten programs. At present, transportation expenses associated with pre-K programs are not eligible for transportation aid. NYAPT respectfully urges the legislature to consider making pre-K transportation costs eligible for transportation aid to facilitate attendance and support the success of this important initiative. School transportation providers will need to adjust training and operations to accommodate pre-K students, who pose unique challenges for safe transportation due to their age.

Zero Emissions School Bus Transition

We are disappointed that the Executive Budget does not provide additional financial support or address the unrealistic schedule for transitioning school bus fleets to zero emissions. We ask the legislature to consider the following during this legislative session.

We recommend amending the compliance dates during this legislative session, removing the 2027 date and resetting 2035 as the date by which only zero-emission buses may be purchased. It is clear today, with three years' experience in the transition process, that the compliance dates set in 2022 are unrealistic. California, a state that New York has followed in its environmental initiatives, has recognized the challenges and set 2035 as the date by which only zero-emission buses will be purchased. They have acknowledged that

transitioning an entire statewide bus fleet is a monumental task that requires careful planning and sufficient funding. New York must recognize this as well and adjust to meet today's realities.

The 2027 deadline for purchasing electric buses is fast approaching. Bus operators will begin planning for the 2027 new school bus deliveries in the Fall of 2026. Many school districts in the State are not prepared to support the deployment of electric buses due to delays in fleet electrification planning studies, insufficient utility infrastructure, supply chain constraints, and limited local public support. Many school districts will seek the first of two available waivers from the State Education Department to delay implementation.

Regarding the waivers, we appreciate the legislature's flexibility on the approaching 2027 purchase deadline; however, waivers only delay the transition and create an untenable crisis for school districts as we approach the 2035 deadline for full transition, when all fleets must be converted to zero-emission vehicles. When waivers are no longer available, school districts will need to convert a large number of buses over a short period to meet the 2035 deadline. This will not be financially or logistically feasible.

Resetting the purchase deadline would give the state more time to secure adequate funding and allow bus operators to build out infrastructure. While EPA and NYSBIP funding programs offer valuable support, they are insufficient to fully finance the transition. Furthermore, the proposed \$100 million cut to the Sustainable Future Program for 2027-28, intended for electric bus purchases, will exacerbate the funding shortfall.

Local taxpayer acceptance has been questionable due to concerns about transition costs and future uncertainties. The recent NYS Education Department survey on "Zero Emission Busing" reports that 30% of electric bus propositions put to the public failed last year. Also, many schools decided not to submit proposals to purchase electric buses because they believed the public would not support them. We ask the legislature to resolve the stalemate that arises when local taxpayers do not approve the purchase of electric buses despite the state's requirement to do so.

Lastly, during the previous legislative session, the legislature enacted a new statute, GBS, Chapter 20, Article 11-c, Section 199-o, that affects electric bus sales. This legislation requires bus dealerships in New York to provide an independent, third-party range estimate to school districts at the point of sale.

The law took effect on January 1, 2026, and noncompliance with its provisions results in a \$1,000 fine per bus.

At present, neither a third-party range estimate nor a procedure for obtaining one is available. The law also does not define what constitutes a third party. This requirement prevents a bus dealer from selling an electric bus in New York State without incurring a \$1,000 fine per vehicle sold.

We request that the legislature either repeal this legislation to make electric buses available for commercial sale without penalty or postpone enforcement until an independent third-party range-estimation process is developed.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and recommendations regarding the FY 2026-27 Executive Budget proposal. We are available to discuss these recommendations further should you need additional insight or information.

NYAPT sincerely thanks the legislature for its ongoing support of school transportation in New York State.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David F. Christopher".

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