



NYAPT

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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Our future is riding with us!

February 14, 2018

Honorable Members of the New York State Senate and Assembly:

On January 31st, we were honored to offer testimony before the Joint Assembly/Senate hearings on the Elementary and Secondary Education proposals in the Executive Budget.

We wanted to take a moment to share with you several concerns as well as several opportunities in that budget proposal.

NYAPT SUPPORTS EACH OF THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSALS RELATED TO:

- 2018-2019 funding for *Transportation Aid*, as it keeps the current funding formula in place and fully funds transportation aid in accordance with that formula;
- 2018-2019 funding for the *School Bus Driver Training* program within SED at a level of \$400,000. NYAPT believes that an increase in this funding is appropriate but appreciates the continuation of this valuable resource for driver training and student safety;
- Proposed *increase in the fines* levied on individuals convicted of violating Section 1174 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law (illegally passing a stopped school bus);
- Proposed changes to Section 1229 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law related to consistency in the use of *passenger seat belts in passenger-type vehicles* that are used to transport students;
- Proposed authorization for the *installation and use of 'stop arm cameras' on school buses* to facilitate the issuance of summons on motorists who violate Section 1174 of the Vehicle and Traffic Law by illegally passing stopped school buses. We have identified several aspects of this proposal that would require modification but we endorse this proposal as critical for our children's safety. We have supported S518/Young and A321/Magnarelli which would accomplish the same objectives! **NYAPT strongly supports stop arm cameras on school buses!**

TWO PERCENT GROWTH CAP: NYAPT IS OPPOSED

We are, however, deeply concerned about and **OPPOSE** the Governor's proposal to impose a 2% growth cap on expense-based aids which includes Transportation Aid. While this cap would not take effect until the next fiscal year, it will have significant impact on school transportation operations and, most importantly, child safety.

School transportation services are "demand driven." That means that, while districts transport many students in fully-loaded buses, there are numerous and costly instances where such transportation is of lower-incidence students, such as students with IEP requirements, homeless students, foster care students and non-public students. As one example, many schools find that students who present as "homeless" appear at different times during the year (when they become homeless and need our support) and must be transported as far as 50 miles from their current residence.

Schools do not have any choice in terms of providing such transportation and cannot plan on such transportation costs in their annual budgets. Accordingly, the costs for those types of transportation are currently reimbursed the following year in recognition of that volatility and demand-driven nature.

To impose a cap on those services puts districts in a clearly unfunded mandate situation where they *MUST* provide transportation but they *CANNOT* be assured of reimbursement from the state, which required that transportation. ***There is nothing fair about that.***

We understand fully that the state and local districts must take all reasonable and practical steps to manage and control costs and to attempt to maximize available dollars for instruction of our students. We cannot, however, step back where we think that decisions by the state could ***adversely affect our ability to ensure safety for our children*** who ride yellow school buses. Cuts in state support could lead inevitably to reductions in training time for drivers and aides, longer bus rides for all students as routes are cut back, failure to replace older and less efficient school buses, changing successful safety practices in terms of routing and scheduling, and other factors.

Our association believes that there are areas in which the state could take action to ***relieve districts and contract operators of mandated services*** and we would be happy to share those with you. These involve equipment requirements, long-distance transportation requirements of certain students, annual school calendars and “bell times”, and related topics that we have previously laid out for the benefit of mandate task forces and related efforts.

And lastly, this cap is being proposed at a time when we are seeking funding for the costs of transporting Universal Pre-K students and for the costs of employing school bus monitors to assist with security, bullying and Pre-K services. Those costs are currently NOT covered by Transportation Aid. It would be completely inappropriate for the state to enact a ‘cap’ on transportation aid when ***there are significant costs that the state does not currently honor in distributing transportation aid.***

The transportation managers and professionals in your legislative district are available to you for discussion about any of the foregoing points. And as always, I am available in our state’s Capital to come and discuss this with you personally.

Thank you for your attention to and consideration of our concerns and recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Mannella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Peter F. Mannella
Executive Director