



EXHIBIT "A"

March 16, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

As you know, COVID-19 virus is presenting us with new and unprecedented challenges at many levels. The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) represents private school bus contractors, who are responsible for transporting nearly 38 percent of the 26 million children to-and-from school each day. Our member companies continue to work together in concert with our school districts – keeping our students safe and secure. Unfortunately, as we have seen, as the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 have increased, various measures have been put in place to contain the spread of the virus. These measures include mandated closure of schools for a period of time, until this imminent threat dissipates.

These are extraordinary times, and we urge you to take immediate federal action that directs state Departments of Education to require their school districts to continue to pay for pupil transportation funding for a 180-day school year in the event of any reduction in transportation days. These funds are already allocated in State budgets and mechanisms are currently in place to distribute these funds. Our concern lies within a desire to maintain a sound student transportation infrastructure through this health crisis, a system that requires us to be prepared to re-engage immediately after this unprecedented interruption to the school year. It will not serve the schoolchildren of this country to have 38 percent of available student transportation options eliminated after this crisis subsides.

While the health and safety of our children remains our collective focus, we are vitally concerned in two areas that will undoubtedly affect the school children we transport. Our first concern is our employees; drivers, monitors, office staff and maintenance staff. Maintaining pupil transportation funding, and continuity in our payments, results in our workforce being provided a regular paycheck.

Specifically, our drivers cannot afford to live without a paycheck or support their families on a reduced amount of money they would collect by filing for unemployment insurance. Therefore, maintaining consistent pupil transportation funding through this crisis will enable our members provide a regular paycheck on an ongoing basis. In addition, a regular paycheck may ensure that drivers will not seek other employment, and will instead be available when school resumes. As you may know, the industry already suffers from a shortage of school bus drivers, and if the funding stream to contractors does not continue during this closure, we risk losing school bus drivers to employment opportunities.

The driver shortage will make the already challenging quest to find new drivers even more difficult. Keep in mind, furthering complicating this issue is the simple fact that it can take up to 12 weeks before a new driver can be adequately and appropriately trained, tested, and licensed.

In addition, like many businesses, school bus contractors have fixed costs and overhead – representing about 65 percent of operating expenses. For example, investment in equipment (i.e. – school buses) remains a major expense and is based on the assumption of approximately 180 days of transportation revenue over multiple years. A disruption in the student transportation revenue stream (i.e.- less than 180 contracted school days) will make it extremely difficult to meet financial obligations.

Finally, with the reality of school closures, the ability of many children to receive adequate nourishment through school breakfast and lunch programs will be compromised, and in worse case scenarios, curtailed indefinitely. Since school bus contractors already know pick-up and drop off routes, we are poised to provide distribution of meals to students for school districts. The continuity of these programs could be a net benefit of the decision to maintain payments to school bus contractors through the entire term of this crisis.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Please feel free to contact me at 703-684-3200 ext. 700, or via email at cmacysyn@yellowbuses.org - should you require further information.

Sincerely,

Curt Macysyn

Curt Macysyn

Executive Director