



NYAPT

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

266 Hudson Avenue • Albany, NY 12210 • PH: 518-463-4937 • FX: 518-463-8743 • WWW.NYAPT.ORG

Our future is riding with us!

2017-2018 SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

NYAPT recommends and will advocate for the following priority areas in school transportation to the Governor, to the State Legislature, and to the Board of Regents, for consideration in the 2017-2018 State Budget:

❖ *Continue to Provide Sufficient Funding for School Transportation*

NYAPT urges that the State continue the current 'expense-approach to school transportation aid in the absence of any viable alternatives at this time. Under this funding approach, the State reimburses school districts for the costs of transportation at levels between 6.5% and 90% of the actual costs, depending upon the wealth factors of the district. In recent years, school districts have taken significant steps to become even more efficient than ever and the expense-based approach is working as it was intended. We would urge the continuation of 'expense-based' aid for school transportation which recognizes the volatility of transportation costs to districts and taxpayers.

❖ *Provide Funding in Support of Transportation Services for Universal Pre-Kindergarten Students*

NYAPT is recommending inclusion of funds in the State budget to support the delivery of transportation services for students enrolled in Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. Several years ago, the State enacted a law that allows school districts to provide "Pre-K" transportation, but place the burden for paying for that transportation entirely on the school districts. This needs to be corrected.

In addition to the provision of funding, we would recommend that the State engage in a thorough discussion about the issues related to safely and efficiently transporting children to the Pre-K programs. It is important that guidelines be formulated to ensure the safety of these younger students and to ensure the capacity of our school districts and transportation providers to transport them safely and within budget realities. These include issues and topics such as the need for attendants, parent engagement, special equipment, seat belts, driver training and others. NYAPT has adopted a policy paper on this subject and we have posted it to our website.

❖ *Allow Expenditures for School Bus Monitors to Be Eligible for Transportation Aid Reimbursement*

NYAPT recommends that the State allow Transportation Aid reimbursement for costs related to employing School Bus Monitors (aides, matrons) on school buses. The need has increased in reference to managing student behaviors and bullying on school buses. As the State begins to advance early childhood education and expand Pre-Kindergarten programs, there will be an increased need for an additional adult aboard our school buses.

Currently, only the costs for those individuals employed as 'attendants' on school buses to assist and support the transportation of students with disabilities are eligible for Transportation Aid reimbursement. It is time to include monitors in the Transportation Aid eligibility category as well.

❖ *Increase Funding for the School Bus Driver Training Program to a Level of \$500,000 for and Target Increase to Necessary Training*

NYAPT has since 1997 supported the appropriation of funds in the Education Department budget for support of the Comprehensive School Bus Driver Training program. This fund has been supported at a level of \$400,000 over these past 17 years. We are recommending an increase of \$100,000 to that training fund which represents the first increase since its inception in 1997. We also believe it is important that the Education Department take specific steps to advance sound training programs through those funds.

Accordingly, we are recommending that the additional funds focus on the following training needs areas:

- 1) training related to safely transporting students enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten programs
- 2) training related to bullying prevention and response, consistent with Dignity Act requirements and best practices
- 3) training for drivers in security measures that will help them to protect the integrity of their bus, their riders and themselves in violent incidents, and
- 4) training related to special education classifications enumerated in the federal IDEA, as required under "PJ's Law"

❖ *Provide Funding for School Transportation Security Measures*

NYAPT urges the State to appropriate or set aside funds in the State budget to ensure the security of school buses and transportation facilities in our schools. Such funding would provide incentives for school districts and school bus operators to invest in perimeter fencing, security lighting and security/surveillance camera systems to enhance security for their school bus fleets and infrastructure.

Recent violations of the integrity of the school bus (e.g., damage to tires, theft of batteries and copper wiring, assaults on bus drivers and children) raise concerns about security of our school buses and facilities, as well as the potential for similar acts of violence or vandalism against those vehicles and individuals.

For more information on school transportation, school bus safety, or this agenda please contact NYAPT Executive Director, Peter Mannella, at 518-463-4937 or peter@nyapt.org