



Ohio Association of Public School Employees

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee

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Testimony for HB 49 by Randy Weston Political and Legislative Director
OAPSE/AFSCME

Lois Carson
State Vice President

Chairman Cupp and members of the committee:

Sandra Wheeler
State Secretary

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the needs of Ohio's public schools with regard to pupil transportation support through HB 49.

School transportation is a valuable resource, serving students, parents, and the many communities served by Ohio's public school districts. The men and women driving these buses and supervising this service provide safe and reliable transportation for these students, enabling them to attend their educational programs.

The buses that our children ride to school in Ohio are aging. While these vehicles are heavy duty and continue to provide safe transportation for our children, the operating cost of vehicles of this age is high. As the fleet ages, costs continue to climb. These costs limit the funds available for our schools and precludes their ability to purchase new school buses.

Bus Purchase Funding

After many years of helping schools purchase buses, the state stopped all school bus purchasing assistance in 2009. Since that time districts have had the sole responsibility of purchasing their own buses. Districts have not had the funding to maintain a regular vehicle replacement plan. This has led to the older vehicles that are operated today, which increase both district costs and the costs used to calculate transportation funding.

We recommend that a school bus purchase fund be established in each fiscal year of the next budget. Funding grants should be awarded to eligible districts on a priority basis, using vehicle age and mileage.

If we can maintain this funding for several budget cycles, this investment will result in a future reduction of operating costs for our districts and ultimately the state.

Base Transportation Funding Formula

Ohio schools are required to transport not only students to their own public schools, but also nonpublic students, charter school students, STEM students, vocational school students and special education students. The funding provided through the state budget provides less than 50% of the cost of this service.

The basic formula in the budget calculates a district's costs for transportation on a cost per student and cost per mile basis. In the last budget cycle districts received the greater of 50% or their state share index of this amount. We recommend at a minimum that the base transportation funding be restored to the current levels.

Currently only students that live more than one mile from school are included in the funding calculation. In many of our districts the local school board has deemed it necessary to transport all students regardless of distance. As a parent, we would want our children to have access to safe transportation. The state should support our schools in these considerations by providing sufficient funds for transportation services and for the replacement of outdated uses. We thank you for your consideration of these very important issues.