



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

News Release

For immediate release

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Two Dozen Organizations Call on the Mamdani Administration to Ensure Students in Foster Care Can Get to School

May 1, 2026 (NEW YORK CITY) — More than two dozen organizations are calling on Mayor Mamdani to include \$3 million in the FY 2027 budget to provide interim transportation for students in the foster system so they do not have to miss class or transfer schools due to delays in arranging bus service.

The City has a legal obligation to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can continue attending their original school and do not experience additional instability during a time of tremendous disruption, uncertainty, and trauma. However, the well-documented problems with school bus service in New York City mean it can take weeks or even months for bus service to begin. In the meantime, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) offers a prepaid rideshare service—but only *after* the student has been waiting for a bus route for at least ten school days, and it requires an adult to accompany the student to and from school, making it an unworkable solution for many students in the foster system.

As a result, many students are frequently absent or are forced to transfer schools when they are placed in the foster system or change foster homes, even though this can further destabilize their lives. In fact, during the 2024–25 school year, 55% of students in foster care were chronically absent, missing at least one out of every ten school days, and more than one in five changed schools mid-year. Research shows that such mid-year transfers negatively impact students' academic performance and decrease the odds that they will earn a high school diploma, and indeed the graduation rate for students in foster care was only 40.5%—by far the lowest of any New York City student group.

There are feasible alternatives for getting students to school while they wait for bus service, from using more city-owned vehicles, like those already used to transport students placed at the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Children's Center; to contracting with existing companies that transport children without requiring an additional adult chaperone, as school districts such as Los Angeles do; to launching a new dedicated interim transportation service for students in foster care.

New York City has a unique obligation to students in the foster system, who are under the care and custody of the City itself. When a child is separated from their home and family, the City must ensure they can at least have uninterrupted access to school—to their friends, their teachers, and a familiar learning environment—at this critical moment in their lives. As noted in a letter sent by the groups this week to Mayor Mamdani: “No child should have to switch schools in the middle of the school year – or miss school entirely – because the City has failed to provide a way for them to get there.”

The full letter is available at <https://advocatesforchildren.org/policy-resource/two-dozen-organizations-call-for-interim-transportation-for-students-in-foster-care>.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.