



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Public Comment to be Delivered to the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP)

Re: Resolution Calling for Major Improvements to School Bus Service

October 28, 2026

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. My name is Erika Palmer, and I'm a supervising attorney at Advocates for Children of New York. I'm speaking tonight in strong support of the Resolution Calling for Major Improvements to School Bus Service.

Each year, we hear from hundreds of families experiencing problems with busing. The challenges disproportionately impact students with disabilities and students who are homeless or in foster care – students who are more likely to go to school far from where they live and who rely on busing to get there.

We were particularly concerned at the start of this school year when thousands of students with disabilities did not have vendors for their routes. While the City did get more buses online, we continue to hear from families.

As of today – nearly seven weeks into the school year – we are working with the families of:

- Multiple kindergarten students who have not yet attended school because their IEP-mandated busing is not in place;
- A first grader placed in a District 75 school who has not been to school because no vendor has selected his bus route;
- An autistic middle school student whose bus gets him to school more than 30 minutes late every day, impacting not only the student but his parent's ability to work;
- A student who started the year without IEP-mandated busing and then was placed on a bus to the wrong school; while waiting for a new bus route, the family is taking three subways and a bus to get their child to and from school each day;

Board of Directors

Kimberley D. Harris, *President*

Jessica A. Davis, *Treasurer*

Eric F. Grossman, *President Emeritus*

Carmita Alonso

Matt Berke

Whitney Chatterjee

Matt Darnall

Jamie A. Levitt, *past president*

Maura K. Monaghan

Jon H. Oram

Jonathan D. Polkes

Victoria Reese

Ashish Shah

Misti Ushio

Veronica M. Wissel

Executive Director

Maria M. Odom

Chief Operating Officer

Melkis Alvarez-Baez, *Secretary*

Deputy Director

Matthew Lenaghan



**Advocates for Children
of New York**
Protecting every child's right to learn

- A student whose commute to his District 75 school, less than four miles from home, takes two hours each way, in violation of his IEP-mandated limited travel time;
- A high school student in foster care with an intellectual disability who has not been to school all year because she has no bus route;
- A student who has been waiting all year for a wheelchair-lift bus; and more.

We appreciate the efforts of everyone in and out of New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) who works hard to get students to school and who tries to resolve cases we bring to their attention. However, these examples reflect systemic challenges that require major reform. The City must work urgently to ensure that it serves every student who relies on bus service and gets students to school safely, on time, and in a reasonable amount of time. Our bus system must be responsive, accountable, and able to meet the needs of today's students.

One year ago, the PEP rejected a five-year extension of our decades-old school bus contracts, extending contracts only through June 2028. The City must use this opportunity to make major improvements to bus service before the current contracts expire.

We urge the Panel to approve this resolution and make bussing a top priority. Thank you.