



**Testimony to be delivered to the
Panel for Educational Policy**

Re: Need for Major Improvements to School Bus Service

October 28, 2026

Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Jindu Obiofuma. I am the Senior Special Education Policy Manager at Advocates for Children of New York, and I am speaking today on behalf of the ARISE Coalition, which I coordinate. ARISE comprises over 120 organizations, parents, educators and advocates who have been working since 2008 to advocate for systemic solutions to the challenges faced by New York City students with disabilities and their families. On the strength of our collective experiences and expertise as a coalition, we strongly support the Resolution Calling for Major Improvements to School Bus Service and urge you to pass it.

Since the beginning of the school year, ARISE members have reported a number of troubling disruptions to the ability of NYC students with disabilities to get to school on time or at all. These issues include:

- Students who were not given routes;
- Students with assigned routes but no bus or driver;
- Students waiting for bus paraprofessionals and unable to ride the bus without them;
- Students waiting for the bus for over an hour or spending hours on the bus;
- Students arriving to school late;
- Students from multiple schools being packed onto crowded buses; and
- Students being dropped off in the wrong locations.

And when these disruptions occur, the available solutions are often neither timely nor effective. Parents report receiving automated responses that issue blanket emails weeks later; disjointed communication between school staff, bus company staff and OPT; and a persistent lack of transparency regarding whom they should contact when transportation breakdowns occur. They also report trouble getting rideshare codes and, when they get them, some parents cannot use them due to their work schedules or health conditions, while others have reported late arrivals or additional passengers impacting what time their children get to school. Parents can sometimes spend several hours a day on these rides, a burden that has caused some to fear for their jobs.

These problems are not new. In fact, many of these challenges happen year after year. Students with disabilities and their families should not have to keep waiting for the City to act. NYCPS must expedite the process of rebidding bus contracts and improve the quality of service to meet students' needs. The City must address the shortages of drivers, attendants, paraprofessionals and nurses. The overhaul of transportation must include

the addition of bus service for after-school and weekend programs. NYCPS must also provide better training for school transportation coordinators and provide clear lines of communication with parents and caregivers—including assigning easily identifiable contacts who will take ownership for resolving problems in a timely manner.

Students should be able to get to and from school safely, reliably and on time. We urge you to approve this resolution and to prioritize working with city and state leaders to help make this a reality for all NYC students. Thank you.