Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education

Re: Examining School Bus Transportation Services in NYC

November 18, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. 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. 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. We urge the City to take affirmative steps to improve school bus service and to ensure a better busing system is in place by the time the current bus contracts expire in June 2028.

Since the beginning of the school year, we have been made of aware of countless transportation disruptions for NYC students with disabilities, including:

- 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.

When these disruptions occur, the available solutions are often neither timely nor effective. Parents report receiving automated responses weeks later; disjointed communication between school staff, bus company staff and the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT); and a persistent lack of transparency regarding whom to contact when transportation breakdowns occur. Rideshare alternatives, when offered, also come with additional challenges including late arrivals and hours-long rides which can cause undue burdens for busy parents who must schedule their days around their rides.

Students with disabilities and their families should not have to keep waiting for the City to act. The City must improve the quality of bus service to meet students' needs by rebidding our decades-old bus contracts; addressing the shortages of drivers, attendants, paraprofessionals and nurses; adding bus service for after-school and weekend programs; providing better training for school transportation coordinators; and assigning easily identifiable contacts who will take ownership for resolving transportation breakdowns in a timely manner.

We urge the City to make these changes and make better busing a reality for NYC students. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.