

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the  
Maryland Senate  
Finance Committee  
For the Hearing on  
Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study (SB 421)  
February 17, 2022**

**SUPPORT**

Free State PTA represents over 34,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is comprised of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education.

**Free State PTA submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 421 – Primary and Secondary Schools – Bus Driver Wages – Study.** This bill requires the Governor's Workforce Development Board to evaluate, study, and identify certain issues related to wages paid to primary and secondary school bus drivers and report its findings to the governing body of each county and Baltimore City, each county board of education, including Baltimore City, the Governor, and the General Assembly.

Free State PTA recognizes that bus drivers' wages and negotiations are an important part of operating public schools. The issue of wages for the bus drivers must be given proper review and recognition. Improper review and recognition of wages could lead to bus driver shortages and affect the children's safe transportation to and from home, school, and recreational activities. Adequate, diligent study and evaluation of bus driver wages is beneficial for alerting local school boards before a situation arises that could cause significant disruption to transportation of students to and from school and activities.

Senate Bill 421 requires that the Governor's Workforce Development Board do two key things:

1. Evaluate the possibility of paying prevailing wage rates, which is the estimated hourly rate of wages paid in the locality as determined by the Governor's Workforce Development Board, to bus drivers and
2. Study and identify the wages that must be paid to bus drivers to ensure that the vacancy rate for bus drivers is below 2% of the total number of bus drivers needed to serve primary and secondary schools in the State.

Because of the importance Free State PTA places on making quality after-school programs accessible for all children, it is important that prevailing wages are paid to bus drivers to help support travel to and from after-school programs and sporting events. Furthermore, we support appropriate wages as it helps garner a reliance on available bus drivers just as we encourage teacher salaries to commensurate with the professional preparation and dedication necessary for effective teaching.

Adequate study of wages can be helpful to understanding reasons for bus driver dissatisfaction and their needs for work requirements. School bus drivers require special licensing and as such they are smaller group of candidates that would have the proper qualification to perform this job. Accordingly, Senate Bill 421 supports students by ensuring that accurate data is available when determining proper wages for bus drivers so that adequate, safe, and efficient transportation is available without interruptions for students.

The mission of PTA is to make every child's potential a reality by  
engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. Page 1

Free State PTA speaks up for every child, and this legislation could be integral to ensuring adequate transportation for children so they can safely and efficiently travel to and from school and activities. This bill provides for the crucial data needed for understanding the suitable wages for bus drivers. The data can be used for thorough decision making regarding appropriate bus driver wages which can affect safe and efficient transportation of students. It is for these reasons above that Free State PTA urges a favorable vote in support of Senate Bill 421.

Testimony is presented on the behalf of

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