



## Statement of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 689

HB 1359 – Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement  
SB 727 – Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement  
Favorable with Amendments  
March 6th and 7th, 2025

HB 1359 / SB 727 is of great interest to ATU Local 689 and the Union strongly urges the Committee to pass this bill, albeit with substantial amendments. While this bill has the aim of protecting contracted school bus worker jobs, as currently drafted it primarily protects the contractors themselves and not their employees. Changes are necessary to ensure that it truly fulfills the aim of preventing displacement of contracted school bus workers.

At Local 689, we represent over 15,000 transit workers and retirees throughout the Washington DC Metro Area performing many skilled transportation crafts for the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), MetroAccess, 9 Charles County School Bus Contractors, DASH, and DC Streetcar among others. Our union helped turn low-wage, exploitative transit jobs into transit careers. We became an engine for the middle-class of this region.

Today, in Charles County, the vast majority of school bus workers are employed by over a dozen private contractors hired by Charles County Public School (CCPS). The CCPS school bus system is fairly unique in this region, with most school systems either providing the transportation services in-house or with far fewer, but larger contractors.

The school bus workers' livelihoods must be a major priority in any plan where the work is brought in-house by CCPS. These workers gave decades of their lives to moving the school children of Charles County. The contractors understandably want to avoid bus services being brought in-house. However, the current status quo is unacceptable for CCPS school bus contracted workers. As such, Local 689 urges amendments to ensure that this Committee passes a bill that is truly protective of school bus worker jobs that provide living wages, fair benefits, and dignity to each and every worker.

We offer this committee two amendments to strengthen this bill.

The first way would be to mandate that any new school bus worker hirings by CCPS to run the service must be done from a list of workers (i.e. displaced worker preferential hiring list) that were displaced by their contractor laying them off or shuttering service. This follows best practices and similar processes in place for large service worker contracts, where the contracting entity has an interest in a stable workforce. We believe that DLS would provide the best language on this, but we suggest the following text for an example:

*After any school bus service provider contract is terminated, every school bus driver and attendant employed by that contractor will be recorded in the Charles County Displaced School Bus Worker Preferential Hiring Program. The program will list and rank every worker participating in the program by their original date of hire at their contractor or the total time of service provided to Charles County Public Schools transportation, whichever is greater.*

*During the five years following the displacement of the last school bus service provider, Charles County Public Schools must fill any newly created school bus driver or attendant positions from workers in the program, starting with the most senior. Workers may request to be removed from the program. Any additional positions needed beyond those included on the list may be filled with outside hires.*

This ensures that any of the workers who already have given years of their life to helping CCPS transport its students are not left without jobs doing the work they already do best.

The second amendment to the bill that we propose would be to prevent these workers from “starting over” as if they never had given years of service to the County. Workers are often paid based on the number of years they’ve worked for a particular employer. In this case, many CCPS contracted workers have given decades of their lives to CCPS. For them to be hired by CCPS directly might mean that they start over at the bottom of a pay scale. There is an easy solution to this, this bill should require that they are given “service credit” for the time that they worked for CCPS contractors if they work for CCPS directly. We would not encourage this to apply to any other components of seniority, just wages and benefits for pay scale calculations.

*For the purposes of determining pay and benefits, workers hired from the program shall be granted service time for the cumulative amount of time that they were employed and working for CCPS school bus service providers.*

ATU Local 689 and our school bus worker members thank this committee for considering our views and urge our proposed amendments to HB 1359 / SB 727.