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Patrick Moran – President

**SB727 – Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 7, 2025**

UNFAVORABLE

AFSCME Council 3 opposes Senate Bill 727. Senate Bill 727 requires the Charles County Board of Education to provide at least ten years' notice before taking any action that results in the displacement of a private operator who is providing student bus transportation services in Charles County. Additionally, the legislation requires the local school system to hold a public hearing on the advisability of the Charles County Board of Education providing the student bus transportation services, which must be done at least 5 years before the displacement.

AFSCME Council 3 represents approximately 50,000 public service workers at the state, county, and municipal levels of government. AFSCME Council 3 also represents school support staff, including bus drivers and attendants, in certain local school systems across the state. In the Charles County Public School System, our union represents approximately 60 bus drivers and attendants that operate the student transportation system provided by the local school system.

Our union is concerned with the notice provisions in this legislation, which appear to be without precedent across the state of Maryland. Certain other local school systems across the state operate a mixed fleet of publicly and privately operated student bus transportation systems yet there does not appear to be any other provision in law that requires this amount of notice when a local school system wishes to directly operate their own student bus transportation system. The notice provisions in the legislation will inhibit the local school system's ability to directly operate and manage more student bus transportation services in-house.

Our union believes that local school systems should have the ability to operate student transportation systems in-house with the use of public employees, particularly where the use of public services saves money in contrast to contracting with the private sector. A 2015 study by the Charles County Board of Education found that transportation costs could be lowered on average by 3.3% a year by in-sourcing bus services rather than utilizing private contractors. Based on the CCBOE FY25 budget, the cost savings to the local school system could total over \$1.5 million annually.

AFSCME Council 3 opposes this legislation and is concerned with the precedent this legislation could establish if enacted.

We respectfully urge the committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB727.