



March 3, 2025

- Good morning. My name is Paula Stone, and I am a second-generation Charles County School bus contractor, continuing a 30-year legacy of my late father.
- I am here today **in strong support of SB727**, which requests that Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) give adequate notice and public notice of displacement to our 24 small businesses and our 400 employees when they decide to bring student transportation services in-house.
- There is no dispute that CCPS has the right to transition transportation services in-house. SB727 does not challenge that authority. However, this bill does seek a reasonable courtesy --adequate notice-- to us because an abrupt transition could have a devastating impact on small business owners like me, and our 400 employees and their families.
- The plan to bring bus ownership and services in house has been mentioned in public by CCPS for the last 5 years as they grow their fleet. But on the contractor's end, it is difficult to make business decisions because uncertainty and not knowing is a difficult way to operate a business with excellence. Adequate notice of a transition is important for all business planning.
- I have also seen a 2015 study referenced in the DLS Fiscal & Policy note. Substantial changes have occurred since the study, including extensive CCPS fleet and staffing growth, new school and programs serviced by transportation, infrastructure for new bus parking and more. Without current data considering these factors, the 10-year-old, 2015 study is not an accurate estimate of cost for in-house transportation services versus private contractors. But SB727 is not about the study.

Additionally, this bill:

- has no financial impact on the opposition, it is a bill of Notice.
- does not dictate the length of our future contract.
- does not mandate contract terms.
- does not change current CCPS contract performance standards for underperformance or breaches, and finally:
- this bill does not interfere with the Union efforts. All contractors will be impacted the same if we do not receive adequate notice of a transition to "in-house" transportation services.

This bill is about fairness and stability.

- If CCPS were to move student transportation in-house today, next year or the following year, we would be left personally liable for our six-year or longer bus loans that we personally assumed in good faith to provide our services. Without adequate notice of displacement, many of us & our employees will be in financial ruin.
- With proper notice to make changes to the services we provide, everyone can make informed decisions, protect jobs, and ensure a smooth transition for everyone involved.
- For these reasons, **I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB727.**

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