

SB 727 Written Testimony and Letters of Support.pdf

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THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
CHARLES COUNTY DELEGATION

Senate Bill 727: Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider
Displacement

February 26, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and esteemed members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

This letter is to advise the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee that Senate Bill 727 was voted on by the Charles County Senators and received a unanimous favorable vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arthur Ellis".

Senator Arthur Ellis
Senate Chair, Charles County Senator

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael A. Jackson".

Senator Michael A. Jackson
Charles County Senator



**CHARLES COUNTY
SCHOOL BUS
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION**

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Jennifer Jones, owner of D and J Buses servicing Charles County School kids.

This committee may ask...why can't this be addressed in your contract with CCPS rather than through legislation?

While it may seem that contractual agreements should be sufficient to address concerns about displacement and advance notice, there are several key reasons why legislation is necessary to ensure fairness, transparency, and stability for school bus contractors, employees, and families.

1. Contracts Are Controlled by CCPS

- Currently, CCPS dictates the terms of our contracts, and bus contractors have little to no leverage in negotiating protections such as displacement notice.
- Unlike other counties where transportation contracts may include long-term security measures, CCPS has declined to include such provisions, leaving contractors vulnerable to sudden termination.
- Without legislation, CCPS can continue to expand its in-house fleet without warning, despite our repeated requests for clarity and collaboration.

2. Lack of Transparency & Stakeholder Input

- CCPS has been expanding its fleet, growing from 8 to 78 buses in four years, without engaging contractors in discussions about their long-term plans.
- If this continues without notice, contractors, employees, and families will be left scrambling to adjust to a major transition with no input.
- SB727 ensures that CCPS must provide public notice and hold a hearing, allowing impacted stakeholders, including parents, employees, and local business partners—to be part of the conversation.

3. Financial Investments Require Long-Term Security

- Bus contractors take on significant personal financial risks—securing six-figure loans for buses and equipment with repayment plans stretching over six or more years.
- Neighboring counties already provide long-term security and notice requirements, and this bill seeks to align Charles County with those best practices.

4. Precedent Exists for Similar Protections

- In 2017, Maryland passed HB1300/CH0419, which required advance notice for trash collection contractors in Charles County—who also invest heavily in equipment for county services.
- SB727 follows the same logic as the legislation that provided advance notice for trash collectors in Charles County in 2017, we transport children – should their safety and stability be protected as well.

5. Ensuring Stability for Employees & Families

- My drivers as well as all drivers, attendants, and support personnel depend on their jobs to provide for their families.
- Without fair notice, they could be abruptly unemployed, causing unnecessary hardship in our community.
- SB727 ensures predictability for the workforce, helping maintain stability for families who rely on their livelihoods in school transportation.

Conclusion

- This is not about restricting CCPS's ability to make operational decisions—but about ensuring fair notice, transparency, and collaboration.
- Because CCPS has consistently refused to include displacement notice in contracts, legislation is necessary to provide a baseline level of fairness for contractors, employees, and the students we serve.
- SB727 is a reasonable solution that aligns Charles County with the best practices, protects small businesses, and ensures a stable and reliable student transportation system.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable report on SB727. Thank you, and I welcome any further questions.



**CHARLES COUNTY
SCHOOL BUS
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION**

Good afternoon, my name is Mark Koch, and I serve as the chair of the Charles County School Bus Contractors. I am here today on behalf of 24 small businesses, the majority of which are women- and minority-owned, in strong support of SB727.

Our organization operates 280 buses, safely transporting over 28,000 students every day. Many of our businesses span two to three generations, with deep pride in supporting the school system by ensuring safe, reliable transportation—allowing educators to focus on student learning, achievement, and equity.

SB727 is a simple request for fairness. It ensures adequate notice before the termination or displacement of a school bus contractor for reasons other than non-performance.

This bill is necessary because:

- Bus contractors make significant financial investment, purchasing and mortgaging Charles County Specifically spec'd buses with the expectation of reimbursement over several years. Without adequate notice, these investments are at serious risk, threatening our businesses and the livelihoods of more than 380 local bus drivers, attendants, and support staff.
- Furthermore, similar legislation (HB1300/CH0419) was passed in 2017 to protect trash collectors in Charles County under comparable circumstances—this bill seeks the same level of fairness for school bus contractors.
- Despite repeated requests for advanced notice of their plans, CCPS has provided no insight, no shared plan, and no formal response—even as they expand their in-house bus fleet. Over the past four years, CCPS has increased their bus fleet from 8 to 78 buses, with more on order. This lack of communication leaves us uncertain about our future.

Our businesses are personally liable for millions of dollars in bus loans, insurance, workforce, parts, and other expenses—often personally guaranteed by our homes and personal assets. If CCPS moves student transportation entirely in-house without fair notice, it would cause irreparable financial harm and disrupt the lives of hundreds of employees and their families who depend on these jobs.

SB727 does not limit CCPS's authority to make operational decisions. It simply provides adequate notice, which:

1. Allow contractors to plan for the future and protect jobs.
2. Strengthens the partnership between CCPS and the contractors who serve the community.
3. Ensures the continued safe and efficient transportation of students without sudden disruptions.

We remain committed to working with CCPS and the County to serve our students and believe this legislation is a reasonable step toward ensuring fairness, transparency, and security for all parties involved.

In Closing we respectfully request a favorable report on SB727 to protect our businesses, our employees, and the families we serve. Thank you for your time & consideration



February 14, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman and Members
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: FAVORABLE– SB 727 - Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland School Bus Contractors Association (MSBCA) supports Senate Bill 727. MSBCA has supported our fellow school bus contractors in the past with various legislation including in 2023 with SB 491 Taskforce Legislation resulting in best practices from other county contractor bus systems and recommendations for a multi-year contract, increased wages, and an 8-hour workday for Charles County bus drivers and attendants, a workforce of more than 400 local workers. But there is still work to be done.

This bill specifically addresses notice of “displacement” for the 24 small student transportation businesses, mostly women and minority owned, that have provided student transportation to Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) for more than 100 years and ensuring “fair notification—at least 10 years—before termination or contract changes that result in the displacement of a Contractor”. This gives all Bus Contractors, who personally buy and mortgage their buses, time to plan and maintain security for their more than 400 employees. This ten-year notice requested appears consistent with neighboring counties that provide School Bus Contracts for up to 10 to 12 years, such as Calvert County.

This is not about contracts or mandating the duration of contracts but about creating a secure operating environment for Contractors, their employees, their families and the school system.

The proposed legislation aims to establish a fair and balanced partnership between the school system and 24 local bus contractors, benefiting both sides. The Contractors have observed the significant increase in the number of school bus purchases by the CCPS school system and this observation alone has raised concern among the Contractors and their employees, that is the impetus and reasoning for this legislation. The SB 727 Displacement bill simply requires fair and sufficient notice to the Contractors and to the public. Such notice to small local businesses that have diligently served the County is a matter of fairness and equity.

The proposed legislation is crucial for ensuring stability and long-term planning not only for the School Bus Contractors but also for the County’s school system, providing mutual benefits and a stronger foundation for collaboration. We know that the Charles County School Bus Contractors remain committed to working together, and we believe this legislation would enhance that partnership by bringing fairness, transparency, and security to all parties involved.

MSBCA serves as the voice of the private school bus companies that contract with local Maryland school systems in 19 of Maryland’s 24 jurisdictions to own and operate the nearly 3,500 contracted school buses that transport schoolchildren over 53 million miles across the State annually.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Steve Nelson

Steve Nelson
President

Maryland School Bus Contractors Association
15 School Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401
202-386-3859

MSBCA serves as the voice of the private school bus companies that contract with local Maryland school systems in 19 of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions to own and operate the nearly 3,500 contracted school buses that transport schoolchildren over 53 million miles across the State annually.

Subject: Support for SB727– Charles County Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement

Dear Chairman Feldman, Vice Chairwoman Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee.

My name is Pascale Small, and I am a parent of three Charles County Public Schools scholars. I am writing to express my strong support for SB727, a crucial bill that ensures the stability and continuity of student transportation services in our county. Reliable and consistent transportation is a cornerstone of student success, and this legislation provides necessary protections for the individuals and companies that have been serving our children for years.

As a parent, I have seen firsthand the invaluable role that our bus drivers and transportation providers play in the daily lives of our children. These individuals do more than just transport our children to and from school—they provide a sense of safety, familiarity, and community. Many of these providers have built relationships with students and families over the years, offering consistency that is critical to our children's well-being. All of these businesses are led by local families and community members who pour into our local economy and county.

SB727 will require the Charles County Board of Education to provide at least 10 years' notice and hold a public hearing before taking any action that results in the displacement of a long-standing student transportation provider. Additionally, the bill mandates written notice by registered mail at least 5 years before any displacement occurs. This level of transparency and advanced notice is essential for ensuring that transportation providers can adequately prepare for any transitions and that parents and students are not left scrambling due to sudden changes.

Without these protections, we risk disrupting not only the employment of dedicated transportation providers and the community members who drive our children but also the stability of our children's way of getting to school and the ability of our parents to continue going to work. The disruption of transportation affects us all.

By passing SB727, the Maryland General Assembly will help safeguard the quality and reliability of student transportation in Charles County. I urge you to support this bill to ensure that our students continue to receive the safe, consistent, and trusted transportation services they deserve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pascale Small
pascaledsmall@gmail.com



CHARLES COUNTY
SCHOOL BUS
CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION

- Good Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee. My name is Paula Stone, and I am a second-generation school bus contractor in Charles County, continuing the legacy my late father James Stone built over 30 years ago.
- I am here today in strong support of SB727, which simply requests adequate notice of displacement for 24 small businesses and the employees we support if—or more accurately, when—Charles County Public Schools (CCPS) decide to bring student transportation services in-house.
- There is no dispute that CCPS has the right to transition transportation services. SB727 does not challenge that authority. However, what this bill does seek is a reasonable courtesy—adequate notice—because the impact of an abrupt transition would be devastating to small business owners like me, our employees, and their families.
- Let me be clear:
- This bill is not about union or non-union contractors—we all face the same uncertainty. Without adequate notice, all contractors and all staff will all be impacted the same.
- This bill does not dictate the length of our CCPS contract.
- This bill does not change current contract performance standards—CCPS already has mechanisms to address underperformance or breaches.
- But this bill is about fairness and stability.
- If CCPS were to move student transportation in-house today or next year, we would still be personally liable for six-year or longer bus loans that we took out in good faith to meet our contractual obligations. Without adequate notice, our ability to plan for the future is severely impacted.
- This bill is not just about us as contractors—it's about the employees who rely on us for their livelihoods and the students and families we serve every day. With proper notice, we can make informed decisions, protect jobs, and ensure a smooth transition for everyone involved.
- Other neighboring counties have demonstrated collaborative partnerships with their school bus contractors, allowing them to plan ahead and continue providing safe, efficient transportation for students. SB727 will ensure that same stability here in Charles County.
- For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB727.
- Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions.