



March 3, 2025

- Good Afternoon Chairwoman Atterbeary, Vice Chairwoman Wilkins, and members of the committee. 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 HB1359**, 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. HB1359 does not challenge that authority. However, what this bill does seek is a reasonable courtesy --adequate notice-- to us because of the devastating impact an abrupt transition would have 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 continue to buy and build their fleet. It is difficult to make business decisions including transition if required, because uncertainty and not knowing is a difficult way to operate a business when you try to do it with excellence. Adequate notice would greatly assist in planning purchases, hires etc. for the business.
- I have also seen a 2015 study referenced in the DLS Policy note. The study is 10 years old and specifically refers to the accuracy of CCPS cost vs private contractors, stating that even small variances in estimating the value can cause substantial changes when aggregated across a large transportation system. This is extremely important - not only small but significant changes have occurred since that study. CCPS has grown to 69 buses, North Point high school was built, Pisota, Science center and Early Learning Center opened, and CCPS added significant staff, and began building infrastructure for their buses. Without current data that considers these factors, the 10-year-old, 2015 study is not an accurate estimate of cost for in-house services versus private contractors. HB1359 is not about this study.

Additionally:

- This bill has no financial impact to the opposition, it is a bill of Notice.
- This bill does not dictate the length of our future contract.
- This bill does not mandate contract terms.
- This bill does not change current contract performance standards—CCPS has mechanisms in place to address underperformance or breaches.
- This bill does not interfere with the Union efforts. All contractors, without notice that services will be taken “in house” will be impacted the same.

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 could be in financial ruins.
- 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 HB1359.**

Paula Stone
Stone Bus at Stonebus@Outlook.com