



Date: March 12, 2026

To: The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins and The Honorable Jessica Feldmark

From: Joe Roberts, J.H. Duffy Bus Co, Charles Co., MD

Cc: Members, House Ways and Means Committee

Re: **Favorable HB1493**- Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider Displacement

Good afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and Committee members, my name is Joe Roberts, and I own James H Duffy Company located at 10535 Berry Rd in Waldorf and I am a member of CCSBCA an organization representing our 24 small Charles County businesses, the majority of which are women- and minority-owned, **in Strong Support of HB1493.**

Our organization operates 315 buses, safely transporting over 28,000 students every day. Many of our businesses, spanning two to three generations, take pride in providing safe, reliable transportation that enables educators to focus on student success and learning.

We are bringing this “Public Notice” bill forward again from last session because it represents not only the **best interests of 1- our companies, but also those of 2-our taxpayers, 3-the state and county funders who allocate funds to our educational system, and 4- our families** who every day depend on safe, reliable and efficient school bus transportation for their precious cargo – their children.

By advancing this “Notice of Displacement” legislation, we aim to protect the public and the critical investments made in student transportation and safeguard the resources that support the educational success of our community.

Some simple facts on that investment:

1. All of us bus contractors make significant personal financial investments at the purchase cost of \$160,000 per bus through personal guaranteed through personal loans with banks over 6-years.
2. Each bus is purchased by putting our personal assets as collateral with our banks, our debt can range in the millions of dollars on any given year. Again, our personal loans are made for 6-year periods.
3. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT TO KNOW- We buy our buses on an annual rolling procurement schedule, when two buses are retired after 15 years, we buy two new ones, for example.**

4. **IMPORTANT.** I want to emphasize that our buses are purchased and **Spec'd to operate ONLY in Charles County, if terminated, we can't bring our buses to a neighboring county to operate. We have no EQUITY in our businesses.**
5. Without adequate notice, these investments are at serious risk, threatening our businesses, our personal assets, and the livelihoods of more than 400 local bus drivers, attendants, and support staff.

Over the past four years, CCPS has increased their bus fleet from 22 to 69 buses, and has made it clear to the public that their intent is to bring the majority of bus operations in-house over time. They have not shared how, when and why...there is no transparency with us or county government as far as we know.

This lack of communication leaves us very uncertain about our future and the future of our employees...our bus drivers, attendants and mechanics.

As a Contractor, 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 our personal assets. If CCPS moves student transportation 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.

HB1493 does not limit CCPS's authority to make operational decisions. It simply provides adequate notice, to our local county government, our parents, and to us, which:

1. Allows contractors to plan for the future and protect jobs.
2. Strengthens the partnership between CCPS and the contractors who serve the communities.

3. It 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 thank our county and state legislators for your support and respectfully request a favorable report on HB1493 to protect tax payers interests, our businesses, our 400 hundred employees, and the families we serve. Thank you for your time & consideration.

Sincerely,
Joe Roberts
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