

Dear House Finance Committee members,

Please read this. Well intentioned efforts to relieve the education / bussing budget will likely have the **opposite effect**:

I am writing to you as a concerned, taxpaying Rhode Island resident. My children attend the Meadowbrook Waldorf School (MWS) and many families in our school use the transportation services from their local district and communities, including my own!

The proposed changes to the bussing zones would significantly affect our school community. Under the current plan, MWS would be moved from zone 4 to a newly drawn zone 9, resulting in a 70% reduction in bussing services. This drastic cut would create serious challenges for many families who depend on reliable transportation to get their children to school.

Access to public bussing allows families to choose the educational environment that best supports their children's growth and development. It also ensures that parents can continue to go to work and contribute to our local economy.

There may be an assumption that families who choose private education can simply absorb the cost of transportation. This is simply not true. At MWS, 44% of our families receive tuition assistance. For many of our families, public bussing is not a luxury—it's essential.

Furthermore, as a local taxpayer my children are not benefiting from the cost of an in-district education; they do, however, take advantage of local bussing. The cost of bussing a child out of the public school district is far, far lower than the cost of educating that child day-in and day-out in that same public school district. The school district is already providing bussing for students within its public school district, at no extra cost beyond the local taxes paid by the residents of the school district, so why shouldn't our students continue to benefit from said tax payments?

By imposing limitations on the transport of students to non-public schools, you would be setting up a two-tier, unequal system of transportation.

I URGE YOU to support the continuation of public bussing for private school students across Rhode Island. Removing or re-zoning this service would not only hurt families, but could also have **unintended consequences—including increased enrollment pressure on public schools and higher costs to the state's education system.**

Thank you for your time and commitment to Rhode Island's families and children.

Sincerely,

Tim Handford, North Kingstown