

Dear Senator Cortvriend and Senator Ujifusa,

Thank you for taking the time to form a study commission on student transportation in Rhode Island. I understand your concern, however, I have chosen to send my child to St. Mary Academy - Bay View from Providence because of the poorly rated Providence public schools were I know are a focused area of improvement.

Bus transportation is one of the very few student supports supported by our tax dollars that makes it possible for my child to get to and from the school that best serves their needs. Additionally, having the buses on the road cuts down the cost on the roads having less cars travel daily. A bus is a safe option to get students to and from school. If there is a change to bus transportation it will deeply impact my child's wellbeing and our families ability to get our child to and from school. Private schools have used buses for decades without issue, this not only creates jobs, but also cuts down on our carbon footprint. I support all students going to the school that best serves their needs in this state and we need our elected officials to help ensure every child has transportation to get to the school that is best for that student through regional busing.

I have reviewed the report and understand the need to cut spending from the state budget, but it is ill-advised to cut areas at the expense of kids' safety and the environment.

Removing busing routes puts more vehicles on the road putting greater safety risk to the general public and the students with more untrained drivers on the road including teenage drivers. Bus drivers are trained to drive at or below the speed limit while parents driving their children to school may be rushing to/from school, and newly licensed children drivers are much less safe than a trained bus driver. The word "safety" is nowhere to be found in the report.

In addition to the safety risk, there is a negative impact to the planet with this recommendation. At the bus stop for our family, this change could put close to an additional 10 personal vehicles on the road, and this does not comprehend the many families that are on the bus before our stop in Providence and Pawtucket. The environmental impact is not addressed in the report.

Families need your support for all children in Rhode Island. I strongly urge you to consider all our students in Rhode Island and their families and protect student transportation options. Thank you.

Bill Thomas

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