



Written Testimony Prepared for the Assembly and Senate

Transportation and Finance Committees

On

New York State Executive Budget Proposal and

Bus Driver Shortage and CDL Licensure

Albany, New York

February 15, 2022

Virtual Hearing

As members of the New York State Camp Directors Association, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Assembly and Senate Transportation and Finance Committees.

The New York State Camp Directors Association (NYSCDA) represents the children's camp industry in New York State. NYSCDA currently consists of approximately 125 member camps throughout New York, representing private, not-for-profit, day, resident and camps that serve special needs populations. In association with member camps from The American Camp Association of NY & NJ (ACA-NYNJ), The Long Island Camps and Private Schools (LICAPS) and Rockland – Westchester Day Camp Association (R/W), we monitor and offer comments on legislation that may have an impact on the camp community and the children and families we serve.

After two extremely challenging years, camps are trying to get their feet underneath them for a return to a more normal summer. The current school bus driver shortage is a crisis for the camp industry. Many summer camps rely on these same drivers to get children to and from their camps, and many camps are struggling to find qualified drivers.

To alleviate some of the burden, NYSCDA proposes that New York remove the under-the-hood requirement for a school bus driver to obtain their Commercial Driver's License (CDL). Our members have found that otherwise qualified individuals are failing the CDL exam, which is required for school bus drivers under federal and state law, due to the under-the-hood portion of the test. This section requires applicants to identify mechanical components of the vehicle, including components that are not relevant to the safe operation of a school bus. This portion of the exam serves no practical purpose for a school bus driver. As opposed to commercial big rig drivers who are responsible for the maintenance of their own vehicle, if school bus drivers encounter a mechanical issue, protocol requires them to first make sure all passengers are safe and then call the bus depot to have a qualified mechanic make any needed repairs. School bus drivers are trained to never exit the bus and leave it unattended while children are on board which renders this section of the test irrelevant for their purposes.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has recognized this driver shortage and has temporarily allowed for states to waive the under-the-hood portion of the CDL exam for school bus drivers until March 31. All other safety and driving components of the exam are still required.

We respectfully request that New York join other states like New Jersey, Wisconsin, Texas and Oklahoma and waive the under-the-hood requirement. This action does not require statutory or regulatory changes. New York simply has to notify the FMCSA that they will be accepting the waiver. We also urge the state to petition the FMCSA to extend the waiver from March 31 until at least September to ensure both camps and schools can meet their driver needs. This common-sense approach to addressing the bus driver shortage will have a tremendous impact.

We also ask Governor Hochul to consider allowing 3rd party testing by qualified examiners for CDL exams which will increase road-testing capacity throughout the state. This is another policy successfully utilized in other states that will allow qualified individuals to receive their CDL's more quickly instead of waiting weeks to take their road test after passing the written test.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.