



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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Commissioner of Education  
President of the University of the State of New York  
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Albany, New York 12234

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February 17, 2016

Hon. Timothy M. Kennedy  
New York State Senate  
Legislative Office Building, Room 506  
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator Kennedy:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the students of Buffalo regarding the allegations of abuse of children on school buses there. The State Education Department is working to ensure that all school buses in New York State are operated at the highest levels of safety and security for our most precious passengers, and that , appropriate corrective actions are taken where necessary.

New York State school bus drivers, monitors and attendants are among the most highly-trained transportation professionals in the country. In addition to the requirement to hold the appropriate operator's or commercial driver's license, our school bus drivers are required to take a 30 hour Basic Course in school bus safety practices, a physical performance test, and pre-service training, safety training and four hours of annual refresher instruction in school bus safety. These include special training in transporting students with disabilities (PJ's Law) and responding to cases of sexual harassment.

In 2015, the State Education Department created a new position, the Director of Pupil Transportation. The primary role of the new position is to improve training in order to ensure that pupils are transported to school safely and efficiently by well-trained drivers. Toward that goal, our new Director just completed a Master Instructor Program for pupil transportation professionals. This program will nearly double the number of active Master Instructors working in the State and improve access to initial training and refresher programs. In addition, the new Director will begin to conduct safety audits of local school districts and bus contractors to ensure that all regulations are met.

I have directed Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, our contractor who reviews allegations of fraud, waste and abuse in pupil transportation operations, to investigate the allegations raised in your letter regarding the Buffalo City School District.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at (518) 474-5844 or [commissioner@nysed.gov](mailto:commissioner@nysed.gov).

Sincerely,

MaryEllen Elia  
Commissioner