

PPS Special Education School Bus Operators Public Comment Date: 04/21/2020

Hello Superintendent Guerrero and School Board Members:

- I am Beth Blumklotz, special education school bus operator with Portland Public Schools. About 80 coworkers and I serve our most vulnerable students, and we are members of ATU 757.
 - Thank you, for having us on the schedule this evening.
 - We hope that you and your families are safe and well.
- We feel appreciative of Governor Kate Brown's decision to pay all District employees during this time of school closure for quarantine due to COVID-19 virus pandemic. Preventing the spread is necessary for us to be able to return to work and attend school safely.
 - Knowing that we will be paid puts our minds more at ease re: keeping food on the table, paying our necessities, including healthcare - luxuries that many in our community do not have.
 - We are able to focus on being safe as we adjust to a new isolating normal.

Our Request - Ensure First Student Contractor Does What's Right by Their Sub-Contractors, the School Bus Operators

- FS school bus operators are guaranteed health coverage thru the end of the year. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed 9/05/2019.
 - Please do the right thing and make sure First Student follows through and maintains their sub-contractors' benefits.
- Why not provide funding so First Student operators can be paid?
 - Not all FS operators are receiving unemployment benefits, and not all are receiving them stress-free:
 - Three and four hour waits on the line listening to the phone ringing, hoping for a live person to answer
 - Getting disconnected, resulting in two and three more hours because the phone lines are overloaded
 - Having to restart unemployment claims multiple times

Where Would the 💰 Come From?

- The 2019-2020 Budget was set for this current school year spring 2019.
 - Why can't FS be paid with what's already been allocated?
- The federal CARES Act, H.R. 748 that was signed into law March 27, 2020 makes funds available specifically to continue paying PPS employees and it's contractors for the duration of the closure.
 - Additionally, PPS receives minimum of 70% reimbursement for transportation costs related to special education services.

With this significant federal support, we are not understanding... WHY then, does PPS not want to keep First Student operators available for when school starts back up?

- Are people expected to return to work when the message has been sent, "We don't care about you" and "You're on your own"?
 - People will look for and find work elsewhere.
- We recommend a return-to-work bonus for FS operators.
- PPS is already short school bus operators, which strains the Transportation structure and directly negatively impacts students and their families.
 - It's cost effective for our District to keep the drivers we have, rather than to hire, train and certify new ones.
 - Please remember - there's a shortage of school bus drivers all across the country.
 - Quality PPS drivers quit every year because of the stresses associated with working while being short drivers to cover routes each day.

Our position is that, in order to be prepared for when school is back in session, we need trained and certified school bus operators. This includes, keeping the ones we already have.

Please remember, these last weeks have been stressful on all of us. Now, is the time to take care of and look out for everyone in our family.

Thank you, for your time and consideration,

Beth and PPS Special Education School Bus Operators




FOR PROFIT
IN THE WRONG
RESPONSIBLE
WARRANTY
THOUGHTLESS

FIRST STUDENT AND PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TAKE CARE OF ALL YOUR SCHOOL BUS WORKERS
IN TIMES OF CRISIS FOR PROFIT COMPANIES
THINK ONLY ABOUT THEIR MONEY AND NOT ABOUT
OUR COMMUNITY, THE CARES ACT, HR 748
HAS FUNDS AVAILABLE. DO THE RIGHT THING!



SELFISH
TRAGIC
UNETHICAL
DISHONORABLE
EXPLOITED
NEGLIGENT
DRAFTING TINKERS



SCHOOL BUS

WE ARE ALL IN THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES TOGETHER. WE NEED TO LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER LIKE NEVER BEFORE! I ASK THE SCHOOL BOARD TO "STEP UP" & BE "AN EXAMPLE" OF "CARING"—BY NOT ALLOWING OUR FIRST STUDENT DRIVERS TO LOSE THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE—DURING THIS DANGEROUS PANDEMIC. **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!** ☺

