



For Immediate Release

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National School Transportation Association Lauds Senate for passage of CARES Package that Highlights Importance of Maintaining Student Transportation Payments

Today, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) applauded the Senate passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act). The legislation, which was the subject of intense negotiations over the past week, cleared the Senate by a 96-0 vote in the early morning of March 26th. It now heads to the House of Representatives, where passage is expected tomorrow.

A key provision, designed specifically due to NSTA expressing and elevating concerns about continuing contractual payments to school bus operators, was included in the bill.

Overall, the bill provides \$30.75 billion for an "Education Stabilization Fund" for states, school districts and institutions of higher education for costs related to coronavirus. Of that, \$13.5 billion is allocated for elementary and secondary education schools, distributed through states. Of note is a provision vital to school bus operators. It includes a condition on receipt of that funding as follows: "A local educational agency, State, institution of higher education, or other entity that receives funds under 'Education Stabilization Fund', shall to the greatest extent practicable, continue to pay its employees and contractors during the period of any disruptions or closures related to coronavirus." [Section 18006]

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, NSTA vigorously pursued guidance for the student transportation industry by asking U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and 50 state governors to immediately require school districts to fund pupil transportation contracts through the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic. NSTA Executive Director Curt Macysyn indicated that the organization continued to work with Governors, State Departments of Transportation and Education, Congress and the Trump Administration to craft a workable resolution that could provide relief for hundreds of thousands of school bus drivers, mechanics, dispatchers, and office support staff and preserves the capacity of private student transportation to re-engage immediately after this crisis is resolved.

"NSTA heard from many of its members that school districts may not feel empowered to act unilaterally, and were seeking guidance on making continued payments to school bus contractors and others. This bill provides that guidance, as the clear legislative intent is for schools and school districts to continue to pay its employees, and to maintain relationships with and continue to pay its contractors throughout the conclusion of the school closures related to the COVID-19 health crisis. Maintaining these relationships allows contractors to continue to pay their employees, and stay solvent, and will provide reassurances to the districts that the contractors will have the staff to be able to start up service again when it is needed." Macysyn stated.



NSTA was able to activate its grass-roots network and successfully engage with federal legislators to clearly and effectively communicate the plight of the industry. Because of the current circumstance, with the U.S. Capitol Building closed, the organization emphasized a virtual approach that resonated in the Nation’s Capital.

Statistically, private school bus contractors provide approximately 38 percent of school bus services for districts around the country employing 250,000 people. Industry-wide almost 26 million students are transported to-and-from school on a daily basis, utilizing nearly 500,000 school buses. The iconic yellow bus is acknowledged as the safest form of transportation for students to get to school, as well as extra-curricular activities, and student transportation is the largest piece in the overall transportation sector.

“The CARES Act was passed primarily to maintain the employer –employee relationship, across the public and private educational transportation sectors, through the conclusion of the COVID-19 health crisis. We believe this guidance from Congress provides the necessary support that school districts need in order to continue to pay for student transportation expenditures during this period of disruption,” Macysyn concluded.

NSTA thanks the many Senators and House members, as well as staff members, who supported our efforts in the legislative process. We also applaud the Trump Administration for taking decisive action during this crisis.

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About NSTA: National School Transportation Association has been the voice of private school bus contractors, manufacturers and suppliers since 1964. The association provides school transportation professionals with the tools and resources they need to make school buses safe, affordable, and efficient nationwide.