

Talking Points for Nonpublic School Transportation

- Transportation for nonpublic school students is the lifeblood of nonpublic schools.
- In Governor Murphy's 2019 Budget, the ceiling for nonpublic school transportation was cut from \$1,000 to \$884. The Legislature had increased the \$884 to \$1,000 for the 2017 – 2018 school year, after the ceiling had been frozen for the prior seven years. Many parents were able to get transportation for their children as a result of this increase.
- The reduction from \$1,000 per pupil to \$884.00 is particularly disturbing for nonpublic school students and parents because Governor Murphy's Budget contains over \$283 million in new money for public schools.
- Most nonpublic school transportation is provided by private bus companies. Many of the companies either do not bid on a route at \$884.00 or less or have already indicated that they can only bid at a higher rate.
- Without transportation, parents are often unable to get their children to school, even though the aid-in-lieu amount be paid to the parent in the amount of \$884.00. Many of these parents work two and three jobs in order to cover the nonpublic school tuition. When a bus route is cancelled because of the bid ceiling, many nonpublic school students are forced to transfer to a public school at greater taxpayer expense. **It is important to note that no public school student is ever denied transportation as a result of the cost.**
- It would be possible to shift money from another Budget account that is over-funded and transfer it to the cost of increasing nonpublic school transportation – an option that was used in the Fiscal Year 2018 Appropriations Act.
- Districts and private bus company operators indicate that the reason for their inability to run a route at or below the maximum per-pupil amount is that, in spite of reductions in fuel costs in recent years, drivers' salaries and insurance premiums have increased.

The effort to increase the ceiling for nonpublic school transportation can be made in various ways including class projects for letter writing and visits to appropriate legislators.

Any trips to Trenton made between now and June by individual classes should include an opportunity to speak to key legislators about the status of nonpublic school transportation.

Particularly effective would be the response from parents who received transportation last year at \$1,000 per pupil and would potentially lose transportation if the ceiling would revert to \$884.00.