



City School District of Albany 2020-21 Legislative Priorities Support for Expanded Child Safety Zone Criteria

Transportation is a critical tool for addressing chronic absenteeism, which is a leading indicator of low student performance in New York and nationwide. The current structure of the state's transportation law limits our ability to provide transportation for children who do not have a safe route to walk to school because the criteria for Child Safety Zones does not account for crime rates and the density of vacant buildings.

Both the New York State Assembly and Senate have legislation pending that would address this matter (A7242/S5719). We ask for your support in passing this legislation and adopting the necessary regulatory changes.

State law allows districts to create Child Safety Zones and provide bus service for students in those zones who would not otherwise be eligible for busing, and receive state reimbursement for those under-mileage students. However, the regulatory criteria to establish Child Safety Zones currently take into account only traffic and pedestrian safety conditions that are most commonly found in rural and suburban communities, such as high speed limits and lack of sidewalks. The current law does not permit taking into account crime rates and the density of vacant buildings. A7242/S5719 would address this. The law does address the commercial and industrial character of the area, but that is not currently reflected in State Education Department regulations.

While districts can choose to ask taxpayers to provide local funding for transporting students less than 1.5 miles without state reimbursement, residents and business owners in Albany already shoulder a heavy tax burden due to a variety of external factors, such as the high density of tax-exempt properties (more than 60%), the oversaturation of charter schools (more than \$35 million in state-mandated payments and services during the current school year) and a school-aid formula that provides our school district with only 45% of our annual funding (compared to school-funding levels in the 60%-80% percent in many other high-needs urban districts across Upstate New York).

We ask for your support in passing A7242/S5719 to broaden the criteria for Child Safety Zones to include violent crime statistics and density of vacant buildings or structures, and we ask for your assistance to modify the regulations so they also fully implement the existing law regarding commercial and industrial character of a neighborhood.

VISION STATEMENT

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

MISSION STATEMENT

We will work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.