

# New York State Educational Conference Board



ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL  
BUSINESS OFFICIALS



## **S.9292-A (Mayer) / A.9238-A (Woerner)**

### **Lowers the period of probable usefulness of zero-emission school buses from twelve years to eight years**

The Educational Conference Board strongly supports the above referenced legislation and urges its immediate enactment.

If enacted, this bill would shorten the period of time over which transportation aid is provided to districts for purchasing and leasing zero-emission school buses (ZEBs), from twelve to eight years.

Transportation aid for bus purchases is provided to a district based on the “period of probable usefulness,” which is defined in State Finance Law. The percentage of the overall cost of school bus which the state reimburses is generally based on district wealth. Distributing funds over the lifetime of the bus reflects the fact that most districts issue borrowing to fund bus purchases, assists in lifetime maintenance costs, and helps structure the budgeting process for the cycle of bus fleet replacement. These same factors apply to lease terms for districts that contract out their transportation.

For a standard diesel bus, the timeline for state aid to be distributed to the district is five years, with leases allowed over the same five-year period of time. These time periods for ZEBs were instead codified at twelve years in the 2022 enabling legislation, based on the expected lives of ZEBs at the time. However, while the inner workings and subsequent maintenance are significantly less complicated, bus frames, interiors and undercarriages are generally the same design as diesel buses and are often the main factors that drive bus turnover. In addition, ZEB batteries are generally limited to seven- or eight-year warranty. Currently, the timeline is such that districts will likely need to purchase another new ZEB before receiving the full transportation aid from the first purchase. Such an imbalance has a negative budgetary impact, and also inhibits the likelihood success of the overall transition.

The ZEB transition is at the top of the list of concerns for school district leaders, including concerns about the general feasibility of implementation and overall cost. Unfortunately, prices for ZEBs have gone up by nearly 10 percent in the fifteen months since the statewide contract was let by the Office of General Services; despite projections that prices would decline. Our collective members have identified numerous specific challenges and barriers with respect to effectively meeting this state requirement. One of the most frequently cited issues – the unrealistic amortization and aidable period under the current ZEB law – would be addressed through this legislation, by better matching the budgetary process to the actual life expectancy of ZEBs.

Therefore, the Educational Conference Board strongly supports the above referenced legislation and urges your approval.