

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE BOARD



Delay the Zero-Emission School Bus Timeline

As state budget negotiations reach the final stages, the Educational Conference Board (ECB) – consisting of education leadership groups representing parents, teachers, other school professionals, building administrators, superintendents, and boards of education throughout our state – **strongly supports** proposals to delay the zero-emission school bus (ZEB) timeline. Our support is consistent with language currently reflected in S.9667 (Ryan) / A.10896 (Solages).

School leaders work tirelessly to improve their students' futures, and therefore understand the urgent need to address climate change. Unfortunately, with less than 200 ZEBs on the road according to the State Education Department, the current mandate timeline is simply unachievable for many districts. Barriers range from workable to insurmountable; assumptions have been challenged and circumstances have developed that stymie the transition's potential for success.

Cost is a major obstacle, with ZEBs costing two to four times more than traditional buses. While it was predicted that total cost of ownership parity (TCOP) would be achieved between ZEBs and traditional buses by 2027 (spurring the codification of the 2027 date), ZEB costs under the statewide contract have instead *increased* – at a rate 33% faster than the considerable inflation over the same period. Additionally, continued Federal support was assumed; instead, the \$5 billion Clean School Bus Program was prematurely ended. The additional cost to the state in additional transportation aid for bus purchases is upwards of \$10 billion.

The electrical infrastructure necessary to support the transition is a significant, and in many cases unbeatable problem. The Public Service Commission ordered the Joint Utilities of New York to assess the electrical capacity of all the school bus depots across the state, and found that 15% of locations did not have the electrical capacity to support *one* bus, let alone a fleet. Additionally, even where costs to districts are not cited in the tens of millions of dollars, wait times for building out electrical capacity is a slow process as the state attempts to electrify our economy.

The storage, maintenance, and operation of the buses have not developed as swiftly as expected. The range of the buses themselves is a frequent concern for many, exacerbated by the state's cold climate. Additionally, storage of buses has ballooned into a sizeable undertaking – new land must be purchased and new facilities constructed, as ZEBs must be stored indoors and five feet apart to maximize range and shorten charging times for mid-day runs. Lastly, the wait times for both fulfillment and maintenance leave them off the road for an unacceptable number of school days.

While this is a worthwhile undertaking for the health of our students and our planet, the reality is that the technology, costs, infrastructure, and deployment simply aren't where they need to be yet in order to uniformly transition to ZEBs. This bill would adjust the clock for these efforts to continue.

Therefore, the ECB **strongly supports** a meaningful delay in implementation of the zero-emission bus timeline, such as the one reflected in S.9667 (Ryan) / A.10896 (Solages), which would delay the current zero-emission school bus (ZEB) transition timeline by five years, moving the 100% ZEB purchase/lease requirement from 2027 to 2032, and the 100% ZEB fleet deadline from 2035 to 2040.