



THE PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Bill de Blasio - PUBLIC ADVOCATE

February 2, 2013

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg,

Over the past two weeks, parents and children across the city have had to cope with a crippling school bus strike that no one wanted to happen – not the Department of Education, not the bus drivers, matrons, or mechanics, and especially not the parents of the 160,000 children who rely on the yellow bus to get to school and back *every day*. As the strike extends into its third week, as public school parents we stand together to call on you to come back to the negotiating table and find a resolution.

It is imperative that you resolve this strike. Parents and children citywide are struggling to cope with this incredible disruption in their daily routines – particularly those families of children with special needs. Without their school bus service, some children with academic, physical and emotional disabilities are forced to rely on a public transportation system that is ill-equipped to meet their needs, and parents are forced to take time away from work simply to ensure their child can make the trip to school. Parents also have to pay for any additional transportation costs they acquire traveling to and from their child's school, when their child is not with them and any additional childcare costs on the days when they cannot accompany their child themselves. Other parents do not have the money needed to cover the cost of a car service, and so are forced to take multiple subways and buses in each direction. Still others face the daunting prospect of putting their young children on a multiple-hour trip, riddled with obstacles and potential hazards and without a trusted adult to guide them along the way.

You have stated that the City and the Department of Education had no choice in moving forward with the bids as written. You have also stated that the striking employees must resolve their complaints with the contractors who own the bus companies – not the City. These claims are, at best, misleading. In fact, just last year the National Labor Relations Board explicitly stated that the power to control the content of the bid contracts rested with the Department of Education. The City cannot hide on the sidelines, especially not while so many families are suffering.

With each passing day, the urgency to resolve this strike becomes all the more pressing and it is quite simply unacceptable for the City to not be engaged in the negotiation process. Too many of our city's children are being denied access to school and the therapies that they are entitled too. As parents, we stand united in urging you resolve this strike, and offer a path forward:

1. **Acknowledge the City's responsibility in finding resolution to this strike.** As the National Labor Relations Board made clear in a similar case, the City Department of Education is a party to

these contract bids along with the bus companies, and the union. The City must come to the bargaining table and engage the issue in order to help us move forward

2. **Retract the existing request for bids for special education busing and allow for a ‘cooling off’ period.** The request for bids would affect over 1,000 routes citywide. If we pull back now, we can get people back to work and allow for an ongoing discussion on a longer timeframe.

Let us be clear: it is exceedingly important that we retain the safest, most experienced workforce as we find resolution to this strike. We seek a solution that values those who know what it takes to get our children to and from school safely, and who have built relationships with our kids and their families over years of service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill de Blasio". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill de Blasio
Public Advocate