

**January 10,2024 Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Written Comments  
Received between Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>  
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

1 I know my time is short-

Not allowing any general education kids onto buses this year means that we've lost a valuable support structure for families of a student with a disability. Since we're only transporting students with disabilities and students in temporary living situations, we've also turned every school bus and CPS paratransit vehicle into a big sign that reveals personal private information about the lives of the students inside.

I'm here because our family is a success story of ODLSS, a fantastic first grade teacher and early support resources at InterAmerican that got us pointed in the right direction to help us diagnose his disability. We were lucky to have the right combination of doctors, diagnosis, social workers, medication and exercise fairly quickly. By 4th grade, we were on a pathway to success. That's the CPS WIN!

Many other aspects of life brought upset and breakdowns for our son, but school, the bus, the bus stop, and his friends there were a huge part of his day and his social structure. The bus stop was a loose knit natural resource of trusted friends and parents.

The IDEA agrees with me specifically when it says:

...the beginning point for consideration of the appropriate way in which to transport a child with disabilities is the "regular" (i.e., non-special needs) school bus. This "regular" environment must occur unless a child cannot travel safely in the regular bus,...

This fall when bussing went away, and was replaced with a frenzy of car pools and transportation options thrown together, 5500 students, 85% of whom are low-income, were left to our own devices to find transportation options for our children. The best CPS would do for us was to say "Send him on the CTA."

WE WERE LUCKY to qualify for transportation under his 504, but here's my dilemma. For my son, paratransit is not as good as the bus. Last year, his transportation costs were around \$5000 and he was being transported with his schoolmates. This year he's in a paratransit vehicle alone and the costs start at \$80,000/year before mileage and fuel surcharges. That's three times more than our cheapest paratransit provider. Even though there are 4 extra seats that I've begged Chi Chi and Charles Mayfield to fill with kids from the bus stop who live blocks away, they have refused.

Filling these seats would not add any time to the route and be in his best interest. All they've said is basically we can't get all 5500 on a route so we can't put 4 on a route.

Now, I know adequate transportation has been a hard fought battle in recent years, but I'm here before you tonight looking for a partner who sees the value of students with disabilities being transported with everyone else. It's not a win unless all our students are on the bus and when that can't happen, provide them with financial relief (AKA stipends) for them to get to school

Here is a breakdown of my son's route from 3 different paratransit companies as well as one standard large bus company. Uber and Hopskipdrive.com are not CPS Vendors but offer a similar product to the public.

Period of performance: August 1st, 2022 - September 30, 2024

Para transit: (Vehicles with 8 or fewer seats Typically only one student is routed)

Kaizen \$450+\$4per mile (4 AM 4PM)=\$482/day (from CPS Paratransit Agreement

Kaizen Health inc)

AllenGreen Group \$250+ \$4 per mile (4AM 4PM)=\$282/day Zum\$153.50+\$2.95 per mile

(4M 4PM)=\$153.50 \$23.60=\$187.10/day

Previous Years:

Kaizen \$233 + \$4per mile (4+4) =\$262/day December 15, 2021 - June 30, 2022

Northstar taxi \$28/mile (4AM 4 PM)=\$224/day (Oct 1 2021-August 30 2022)

Yellow buses 10 passenger up to 78 passengers

First Student \$288.73+\$6.15/mile (4AM 4PM) =\$337.93/day(8/1/20-7/31/23)

Other Non-CPS options:

Hopskipdrive.com estimates \$46 per day for single fare, not sure if 1 student or up to 6 at one location.

Uber Single fare Estimate \$60 can accommodate up to 4 students.

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2 Two Minutes-

As a public participant at last night's Special Education Advisory Committee I greatly appreciated one of the commissioners stepping forward with the suggestion that in future meetings perhaps the two minute limit to public participation could be increased or varied at times as it is very difficult to illuminate an idea in under two minutes.

I appreciate the generous listening behind that request. Especially as someone who can often lose his train of thought. But, if there were a vote, I'd like to cast my vote with the current board policy and the board members that have to carry out policy like Chairwoman- FAHEY-HUGHES.

Two minutes is sufficient for the purpose of starting or updating a conversation.

In addition to the two minutes allotted there are other areas for interaction and deeper discussion. In most meetings there is a chance for board or committee members to ask specific questions, and after most meetings there is an opportunity for casual conversations and connections on specific topics and there are always written comments.

More in depth:

The two minute limit is helpful for speakers to concentrate and focus their topic. I've spoken before the board 3-4 times this year on bussing and tax related issues and can spend 4-10 hours pairing an idea down to it's best points. Much of that time is paring down the thought from 3 minutes to 2 minutes. Yes, we want to be heard, but the two minutes is a good conversation starter and I believe there are sufficient avenues for follow-up. Public participation should be viewed as a starter or appetizer, not the whole meal.

Would 3 or 5 minutes be more beneficial?

3 definitely yes, but after that I fear there would be diminishing returns for everyone including the speaker.

The Ramones changed music forever with an average song time of 2:30. As did the Gettysburg addresses 272 words (about 2 minutes) The two minute limit does lend order especially in meetings with larger attendance and more speakers.

Thank you (If I read this message it would come in around 2:45.)

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