



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Simcha Felder

Felder & Colleagues Working to Prevent Fallout From Bus Company Bankruptcy

SIMCHA FELDER December 23, 2013

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With Atlantic Express Bus Company expected to close its doors on December 31, Senator Simcha Felder (D-Brooklyn), Chair of both the New York City Education Subcommittee and the Children and Families Committee, is working with his colleagues, Assemblyman Dov Hikind and Councilman David Greenfield, to ensure a smooth transition for the more than 40,000 affected public and private school students. Atlantic Express, which declared bankruptcy in November, was responsible for over 1,600 bus routes, leaving children on those routes without a means of transportation as of January 2, 2014.

Senator Felder has been in regular contact with high-ranking officials at the Office of Pupil Transportation who have assured him they are committed to finding other options for the affected students, including assigning the routes to other companies, providing Student MetroCards, or reimbursing parents of special needs students who send their children to school with a private car service.

“This situation is well-beyond finger pointing and the blame game,” said Senator Felder, referring to accusations made by union leaders that the bankruptcy resulted from the City’s

failure to negotiate a new union contract. “The Department of Education and the Office of Pupil Transportation must come up with an immediate resolution to head off this potential crisis. The education of innocent children, particularly those with special needs, should not be disrupted over something as basic as not having an alternate way to get to school.”

“With the departure of Atlantic Express, we are nevertheless optimistic that the remaining bus companies will be able to absorb the bus routes and continue servicing our community with little or no disruption,” said Assemblyman Dov Hikind.

“After last year's crippling strike, we cannot afford to go through a situation again where our children lose their school bus service,” remarked Councilman David Greenfield. “I appreciate Senator Felder working with me and the Office of Pupil Transportation to try and resolve this as soon as possible. The city must take all of the necessary steps before school resumes after the holiday break to ensure that no child has their education disrupted as a result of a bus company's financial problems.”

Senator Felder, a longtime advocate of privatizing school bus service, said his landmark transportation legislation has significantly eased the burden of school transportation costs for private school students.

“Last year, over a million school children were held hostage by the union’s strike. We cannot allow petty politics to adversely affect the safety and stability of our children,” the Senator said. “Privatizing school bus service will save parents and the City a great deal of money. It is definitely a conversation worth having with City officials, and I intend to have it.”