

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

A New York State mandate was issued as part of the 2022-23 budget process which would require school districts to transition to a zero-emissions transportation fleet by 2035.

In September 2023, NYSERDA published the New York State Electric School Bus Roadmap which highlighted several obstacles that needed to be addressed to accomplish the transition that was mandated by New York State. One of the primary impediments is electric grid capacity. According to the NYSERDA document, “most depots across the State currently lack sufficient electrical capacity to charge more than a few buses,” and “there is no comprehensive database detailing where school buses are stored, which makes planning for capacity increases challenging.” The NYSERDA roadmap called for an evaluation of the electrical system and for needed infrastructure upgrades.

The first checkpoint on the timeline that was set forth in 2022, a ban on the purchase of fossil-fueled vehicles beginning in 2027, is rapidly approaching. The State is asking school districts to pour a great deal of taxpayer money into this transition with no evidence that the energy infrastructure will be able to support the rapid transition.

The Wappingers Central School District has the largest district-owned, operated and maintained school bus fleet in New York. Our Board of Education has many concerns about the current timeline. As stewards of taxpayer dollars, we are not able to get a commitment from our local utility that charging capacity for zero-emissions buses will be available to the District by 2027, or any later date.

The Wappingers Central School District, therefore, requests that the state suspend the timeline for this transition and push back the compliance dates. It does not make logical or fiscal sense to make a substantial investment in electric school buses until after the state-wide infrastructure has been evaluated and upgrades have been implemented. We ask that the state involve all stakeholders in discussions involving timelines and the transition.

Sincerely,

John C. Lumia
Board President
Wappingers Central School District Board of Education

cc: NYS Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado
NYSED Commissioner Betty A. Rosa
Charles Schumer, United States Senator
Kristen Gillibrand, United States Senator
Michael Lawler, United States Assembly
Pat Ryan, United States Assembly
Vinnie Riscica, NYSERDA
Christopher M. Capone, Central Hudson CEO
Michelle Hinchey, State Senator (District 41)
Kevin S. Parker, Senate - Chair of Energy and Telecommunications Committee
Rob Rolison, State Senator (District 39)
Anil Beephan Jr., Assemblyman (105th Assembly District)
Didi Barrett, Assemblymember (106th Assembly District) & Chair of Energy Committee
Sue Serino, Dutchess County Executive
NYS School Boards Association, Sandra H. Ruffo, President
NYS School Boards Association, Brian Fessler, Director of Governmental Relations
NYS School Boards Association, Danielle Grasso, Grassroots Advocacy Manager
NYS School Boards Association, John T. Redman, Area 9 Director
New York State Council of School Superintendents
Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents
Dutchess County School Boards Association
Dutchess County BOCES