



July 2, 2020

**WE DON'T WANT OUR CHILDREN STANDING IN THE BUS AISLE:  
RESTORE SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

“Nana, I don’t want to go to school on the bus because it doesn’t feel safe.”

–Child, Age 7, Juliana Circle, Annapolis

“My child is *sitting* in the *aisle* on the *bus*. Our schools can’t even make sure she has a seat?”

–Parent of a 15 year-old, Annapolis

**Dear Council President Pickard and Council Members:**

**Some of our students are being packed into Anne Arundel County school buses.** Children are standing in the aisle. Others are sitting on the floor. This is not safe. The parents in ACT have made it clear to us that our buses are not rush-hour subways, nor our children commuters: they are students in Anne Arundel County Public Schools who deserve safe and equitable transportation. **We urge the County Council to overrule the School Board and fully restore the \$745,100 in funding for seven transportation positions that will not only effectively address these and other school transportation equity issues, but could save over \$2.48m in transportation costs.**

We join a chorus of voices across Anne Arundel County. For many years, communities of color in the Annapolis cluster and elsewhere, and parents in every district, have asked the school board to add bus routes to remedy dangerous walking conditions and to address overcrowded, dangerous, and inadequate bus services. **Consultants hired by the school system confirmed the safety and logistical problems raised by parents.** While many buses are overcrowded, this study showed how inefficiently our buses are being used:

1. 44% of buses were more than half empty.
2. 125 buses carry 10 or fewer students.
3. 60% of school administrators report buses arrive and depart LATE, impacting educational effectiveness and essential breakfasts for elementary school children.
4. Transportation Department staffing is insufficient to fully use an already-purchased bus routing software program that could improve these and other issues, and **could save over \$2.48m per year, according to the School Board’s own study.**

ACT leaders found that this is an equity issue. Overcrowding falls most heavily on minority and low-income families, interfering with their children’s education and after-school opportunities. The consultants found that AACPS needed additional staff to effectively use the routing software AACPS had purchased. The superintendent heard

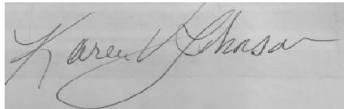
parents and the consultants, and wisely included this funding in his budget request, which you approved.

**This long-sought victory was snatched away.** In response to the pandemic and social upheaval, the school board in a close vote amended the budget and eliminated these essential transportation positions to secure funds for mental health and other positions. This has created a specious argument between transportation and mental health. Of course we agree that our students could benefit from additional staff to help them cope with today's pandemic-related pressures. Yet the school board should not fund those positions at the expense of these long-needed transportation positions. The pandemic will likely only further complicate transportation challenges. **Overcrowded buses are a mental health issue.** There are other ways to secure that funding, such as increased efficiency of transportation or the routine balance excess that has been between \$1.2-\$8m for ten of the last twelve years.

We do not want to continue to hear our children tell us how unsafe their bus is. We do not want to hear of a single child going hungry because his or her bus was late. **We do not want to continue with a wasteful transportation system that could save \$2.48m by giving seven people jobs for a \$745,100 investment.**

**There is a clear solution: restore these transportation positions to the budget.**

Respectfully,



REV. DR. KAREV V. JOHNSON  
First Christian Community Church  
Co-Chair



REV. TIMOTHY S. STERN  
Ark and Dove Presbyterian Church  
Co-Chair

### ACT MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Annapolis Friends Meeting, Annapolis  
Anne Arundel County NAACP  
Asbury Broadneck UMC, Annapolis  
Bread and Butter Kitchen, Eastport  
Centro de Ayuda, Anne Arundel Co.  
First Presbyterian Church of Annapolis  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Arnold  
Joy Reigns Lutheran Church, Edgewater  
Light House, Annapolis  
New Creations Deliverance Ministries, Annapolis  
St. Christopher's Episcopal Church, Linthicum  
St. Martin's-in-the-Field Episcopal Church,  
Severna Park  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis  
Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church,  
Severna Park

Anne Arundel County Muslim Council  
Ark and Dove Presbyterian Church, Odenton  
Asbury UMC, Annapolis  
Broadneck Baptist, Annapolis  
Christ Our Anchor Presbyterian Church  
Fresh Start Church, Glen Burnie  
Islamic Society of Annapolis  
Kingdom Celebration Center, Odenton  
Mt. Olive AME Church, Annapolis  
St. Andrew By the Bay Roman Catholic Church,  
Annapolis  
St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Annapolis  
St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Annapolis  
The United Church of Christ of Annapolis