



"Your Future Is Riding On Us"

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December 16, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas

Dear Governor Abbott,

School districts across Texas have faced the daunting task of providing a safe and healthy instructional model to students this year in the face of a global pandemic. On behalf of the Texas Association for Pupil Transportation (TAPT), I applaud the leadership of school districts and the selfless acts of public-school employees who work tirelessly to promote a safe and healthy environment with the least amount of disruption to the education of our students.

We are encouraged with the recent news of the approval and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to the states. Keeping in mind that school transportation personnel have been and continue to be essential front-line workers, TAPT is appreciative of your willingness to consider including public school district bus drivers, school bus attendants, and technicians for one of the early phase distributions of the COVID-19 vaccine.

School bus drivers have been delivering food, distributing instructional materials, and performing other tasks in support of our students since last March when the pandemic forced the physical closure of many of our school buildings. When campuses reopened, school bus drivers were the first smiling faces many of our students saw after up to six months at home in quarantine. School bus technicians worked diligently to ensure that each bus was properly sanitized every day and ready for the students' safe return.

While school districts have done an admirable job providing the safest environment possible for students and employees on school buses, we are aware that not all solutions will prevent the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, as school bus drivers test positive for COVID-19 or are quarantined for exposure to COVID-19, a disruption of service to students has and will continue to adversely affect pivotal instruction opportunities, possibly requiring the school districts to return to remote education for the students.

There are currently over 30,000 school bus drivers providing transportation to and from school for over 2,000,000 students in Texas. According to the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT), recent estimates indicate that between five to ten percent of school bus drivers are currently sidelined by COVID-19, and those numbers will undoubtedly continue to rise.

TAPT believes that school bus drivers, attendants, and technicians provide vital support to the continuity of public education in Texas. For that reason, I urge you to strongly consider school bus drivers, school bus attendants, and other school district personnel as essential front-line workers and approve them as eligible for the early phase of distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Sincerely yours,

Kayne M. Smith, Ed.D.,
2020-2021 TAPT President
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