Environmental Advocates NY

OPPOSE

Major Detriment | Substantial Detriment | Detriment

Rolling Back Electric School Bus Timelines

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Explanation:
Electric school buses are the cleanest, healthiest way to get kids to school. By using electric school buses rather than diesel-burning school buses, New York stands to realize over $190 million every year in health and climate benefits – more than any other state in the U.S. By eliminating diesel exhaust, electric school buses reduce exposure to harmful air pollutants linked not only to asthma, but also cardiovascular disease, impaired lung development, and impacts on brain development and learning.

Providing electric buses is also an issue of equity and justice. Black students, children with disabilities and low-income students rely on diesel-burning school buses more than others. Diesel bus yards and facilities are often concentrated in disadvantaged communities, and the New York Attorney General has found excessive, illegal diesel engine idling in such bus yards in environmental justice communities.

Under New York's education law, schools must shift to purchasing only electric buses in 2027, and must transition their entire fleet by 2035. Since enacting the law, the state has also instituted:

- a structured waiver process that allows districts facing barriers to delay compliance by two years, and districts may receive up to two extensions;
- continued eligibility for State Transportation Aid during approved extensions; and
- substantial state investment through the Environmental Bond Act and annual budget appropriations.

The electric bus transition is underway, even as districts confront real and challenging hurdles. 10,000 students ride to and from school on an electric school bus and more than 400 school districts—representing more than two-thirds of districts statewide—have completed or are actively developing Fleet Electrification Plans (FEPs).

However, rather than supporting districts through implementation challenges, this legislation would impose a broad statewide delay. Schools and bus companies need help with workforce development to ensure their transportation departments have mechanics and electricians in-house to deal with bus breakdowns and failures. They need additional infrastructure funding and financial support for the programs, software, and hardware needed to charge and manage an electric bus fleet. These issues are real, and in order to address them New York's school districts need more than a deadline extension.

Summary:
Delays the zero-emission school bus mandate for a period of five years; requires school districts to only purchase or lease zero-emission school buses by 2032 and requires school districts to only operate and maintain zero-emission school buses by 2040.