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**House of Representatives**  
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
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**Majority Leader**

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August 13, 2020

Secretary Pedro A. Rivera  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Secretary Rivera,

In my local district and across the Commonwealth there is growing concern with school districts denying transportation services to thousands of students attempting to return to in-person learning this fall at nonpublic and non-traditional public schools.

To clear up any confusion about the responsibility of local school districts to provide this service, I am asking that your department issue clarifying guidance on the matter to ensure that both public and nonpublic school students have access to their regular school transportation and the best possible educational opportunities.

As I am sure your office and Pennsylvania's 500 school districts remember, despite these uncertain times, the legislature intentionally fully-funded education for the entire year so that school districts would have the tools they need to return students to in-person education.

Governor Tom Wolf, supported by your department, has stated that decisions on safe reopening should remain at the local level, where parents, educators and local officials can decide what is best for their community. This must also include the ability of nonpublic and nontraditional public schools to return to in-person education should they decide to do so safely.

Returning to in-person education provides certainty and predictability to Pennsylvania's parents and children and is something that the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stressed is important for the healthy development and well-being of children.

Members of the General Assembly and school leaders have sought out clarifying guidance to provide a clear path to returning to in-person education safely. With the school year quickly approaching, guidance on transportation from the Department of Education is some of the mostly critically needed and sought-after direction.

Without transportation, even those schools that have worked to develop a model for safely returning their students to in-person instruction will be unnecessarily hindered in doing so. With a few short weeks remaining before the start of school, we need to remove this unnecessary hurdle.

Keep in mind, both parents of public and nonpublic school students pay taxes to Pennsylvania and its school districts. Government must be accountable to them by providing transportation to school. This includes providing transportation to nonpublic school students returning to in-person learning even if the accountable public school has elected to begin their school year virtually.

The funding is in place. Failure to transport children to school for in-person education is an unfair setback to students in an already challenging time.

Thank you for your timely attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kerry A. Benninghoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kerry" being the most prominent.

KERRY A. BENNINGHOFF

Majority Leader

171<sup>st</sup> Legislative District