

**VA EDGE**Virginia Coalition to End Discrimination
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SIGNIFICANT VICTORY -- LANDMARK LEGISLATION PASSES FOR NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA!

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Richmond, VA -- Governor Kaine recently signed landmark legislation that has tremendous potential to benefit many nonpublic school families. HB 2302 gives local school boards an option to provide busing for nonpublic school students in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VA EDGE partnered with the Virginia Catholic Conference ("VCC"), the Association of Christian Schools International ("ACSI"), Independent Baptist Association, Virginia Counsel for Private Education ("VCPE"), along with many other individuals and communities. ***By pulling together resources of these faith-based communities, the entire group succeeded in the passage of the first piece of school-choice legislation ever to pass in the Commonwealth of Virginia! As Virginia celebrates its 400th Anniversary, it is incredible to see such positive and tremendous change happen in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Again, it is due to the efforts of not just one individual or group. This triumph is due to many parents and groups coming together as a community for a great cause, states Debra Hinson-Joyner, President, VA EDGE.***

Approximately 20 years ago, there was a "Share the Ride" bill that was introduced, but did not pass due to similar opposition. In 2003, a group of ambitious parents decided to resurrect this initiative. The founding members of VA EDGE include: Debra Hinson-Joyner, Valerie Alves-Newell, Susan Krawczyk, Esq., Mary Copas, Mary Fletcher, Esq., Bonnie Betts, Mary Boener, and Celeste Bauer. Special thanks go out to those members mentioned previously and to the following parents: Joe Underwood, Esq., Jim Lafferty, John Langlois, Malcolm Coate, Megan Gannon, Judy Kaylor, and Mark Metzger for their great support and assistance.

VA EDGE conducted research back in 2003 and unveiled that twenty-seven other states permit localities to provide school bus transportation to nonpublic school students. After this discovery and additional extensive research completed by our VA EDGE attorneys, Susan Krawczyk, Esq. and Mary Fletcher, Esq. and our research associates, VA EDGE got the ball rolling in 2005 when the bill was first introduced by Delegate Gary Reese and his Chief of Staff, Joe Underwood. ***This year was the third attempt to introduce and seek passage of this bus bill. Well, our voices were finally heard throughout the General Assembly and elsewhere! We have made it over the top of the hill. Now, it is full speed ahead, remarks Debra Hinson-Joyner.***

Soon, VA EDGE members will be advised as to procedures on strategy moving forward! There are over 130 local school districts, so it will take time to accomplish this enormous task. Certain districts will be targeted based on feasibility, location, and then implementation of Pilot Programs will happen.

Thanks again for your continued support in this very important endeavor!