

February 2, 2006

Re: Support HB 1408 – “Transportation for Non-Public School Students”

Dear Senators,

Virginia’s non-public students are the Commonwealth’s largest “contingent” of students, larger than any single public school division. These students and their parents **SAVE** taxpayers \$1.5 Billion (a very conservative \$1.486 Billion) for public school operating expenses.

Non-public school parents are **ALL THE SAME** in critical ways:

- They sacrifice to pay tuition (requiring both parents to work);
- They want academic freedom to excel or address their child’s specific needs;
- They often want to instill a Faith Tradition or Value System to their children; and,
- The parents are all incredibly interested in their children and communities, and actively support their schools, because it is the right thing to do, just like voting and volunteering.

Virginia’s urban and suburban areas have traffic problems that are some of the worst in the United States. Major commuter routes are clogged with traffic. Even rural areas lack adequate roadways as urban growth stresses all transportation routes. School transportation is not a matter of convenience for “the rich.” It’s a matter of equity and safety; and for working families especially, it’s a matter of access of educational choices.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION IS THE SAFEST WAY FOR NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN TO GET TO SCHOOL! For the benefit and safety of all of Virginia’s children, families, and communities, won’t you permit all children access to safe bus transportation? Through the legislative process, our local school boards will be allowed to provide bus service to all children. The HB 1408 language is permissive not mandatory.

VA EDGE took a leadership role when we were asked by Arlene Whittick, Publicity Manager, 2005 Census, Fairfax County Public Schools, to add the FCPS link on to our coalition’s Web site about the Census. See attached correspondence. We responded right away by adding the link and encouraged all of our parents to participate in this process to assist the County in getting their funds.

Please read the attached letter of support from the Association of Christian Schools International. This large association provides service to 159 Christian schools in Virginia and more than 4,000 schools in the U.S.

We know these parents and communities would like your help re: voting in support of HB 1408 when it is introduced soon by Chairman Bob Tata to the Senate Committee on Education. We will not forget what you do for our children today. The way you vote for HB 1408 will be printed and seen by your constituents. Thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Hinson-Joyner
Chairman of the Board, President