

June 27, 2023

Geoffrey Beckwith
Executive Director & CEO
Massachusetts Municipal Association
3 Center Plaza, Suite 610
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

Thomas Scott
Executive Director
Massachusetts Association of School
Superintendents
209 Burlington Road, Suite 113
Bedford, MA 01730

Dear Mr. Beckwith and Mr. Scott:

I am writing to urge the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the 351 Massachusetts cities and towns that they represent, to take full advantage of newly available federal grants to clean up our school bus fleets.¹ Most of the iconic yellow school buses across America still operate on diesel fuel, “emitting air pollutants from their tailpipes that are particularly harmful to children”² – impacting their learning, development, and health through causing asthma and other respiratory diseases, heart disease, and cancer, and impacting children’s English and math scores.³ Communities of color are disproportionately exposed to this risk.⁴ Furthermore, the greenhouse gases that are emitted by diesel buses contribute to the climate crisis.⁵ The bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), passed in November 2021, contains programs to replace diesel school buses, public buses, and train engines with electric powered buses and electric train engines, which will take some of the worst polluters out of our cities and towns.⁶

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced that applications are now open for one of these programs, the Clean School Bus (CSB) Grants Program, with

¹ Massachusetts Municipal Association, “Home,” <https://www.mma.org/>.

² EPA, “What If Electric School Buses Could be Used to Supply Power When Off Duty?,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/what-if-electric-school-buses-could-be-used-supply-power-when-duty>.

³ Mission Hill Gazette, “Wu calls for end of dirty diesel polluting school bus fleet, full electrification by 2030,” Seth Daniel, May 7, 2021, <https://missionhillgazette.com/2021/05/07/wu-calls-for-end-of-dirty-diesel-polluting-school-bus-fleet-full-electrification-by-2030/>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ EPA, “What If Electric School Buses Could be Used to Supply Power When Off Duty?,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/what-if-electric-school-buses-could-be-used-supply-power-when-duty>.

⁶ World Resources Institute, “US Infrastructure Bill Allocates Billions for Clean School Buses, Carbon Removal,” September 19, 2022, <https://www.wri.org/outcomes/us-infrastructure-bill-allocates-billions-clean-school-buses-carbon-removal>; The White House, “Fact Sheet: The Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal,” press release, November 6, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/06/fact-sheet-the-bipartisan-infrastructure-deal/>.

approximately \$400 million in grant funding available for communities across the country.⁷ The CSB Grants Program Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is currently soliciting applications nationwide, with a deadline of Tuesday, August 22, 2023,⁸ and is prioritizing applications that “will replace buses serving high-need local education agencies, Tribal school districts funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or those receiving basic support payments for students living on Tribal land, and rural areas.”⁹ Any of your municipal government and school district members responsible for providing school bus service to one or more public school systems, or for purchasing, leasing, licensing, or contracting for service of school buses, are eligible to apply, and I highly encourage you to work with your members to solicit applications for this funding opportunity.¹⁰

Last fall, the Biden-Harris Administration announced the first recipients of EPA’s Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, the first round of funding from the CSB Program.¹¹ EPA awarded nearly \$1 billion to 389 school districts to fund electric and low-emission school buses across school districts.¹² Five Massachusetts school districts secured \$29,535,000 in rebates for the purchase of a total of 75 new, clean electric school buses.¹³

I fought hard to ensure this historic investment was included in the IIJA. The infrastructure bill’s EPA Clean School Bus Program, with a historic \$5 billion investment for low- and zero-emission school buses,¹⁴ was modeled on my *BUILD GREEN Infrastructure and Jobs Act*, which would provide \$500 billion in grant funding over ten years for modernizing our infrastructure and electrifying public transit systems, including school buses.¹⁵ In addition to IIJA funding, the *Inflation Reduction Act*, passed in August 2022, includes \$1 billion for states, municipalities, tribes, and nonprofit school transportation associations to use for clean heavy-

⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$400 Million Grant Program to Fund Clean School Buses that Reduce Emissions and Protect Children’s Health,” press release, April 24, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-400-million-grant-program-fund-clean-school>.

⁸ EPA, “Clean School Bus Program Grants,” <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-grants>.

⁹ EPA, “2023 Clean School Bus (CSB) Grant Program,” <https://www.epa.gov/grants/2023-clean-school-bus-csb-grant-program>; EPA, “Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$400 Million Grant Program to Fund Clean School Buses that Reduce Emissions and Protect Children’s Health,” press release, April 24, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-400-million-grant-program-fund-clean-school>.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ EPA, “Biden-Harris Administration Announces Nearly \$1 Billion from EPA’s Clean School Bus Program for 389 School Districts,” press release, October 26, 2022, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-1-billion-epas-clean-school-bus-program>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ EPA, “Awarded Clean School Bus Program Rebates,” <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/awarded-clean-school-bus-program-rebates>.

¹⁴ EPA, “Clean School Bus Program,” <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus>.

¹⁵ Office of Senator Elizabeth Warren, “Warren, Andy Levin, Markey, and Ocasio-Cortez Unveil the BUILD GREEN Infrastructure and Jobs Act to Jumpstart the Transition to Electric Transportation and Modernize Infrastructure,” press release, March 18, 2021, <https://www.warren.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/warren-andy-levin-markey-and-ocasio-cortez-unveil-the-build-green-infrastructure-and-jobs-act-to-jumpstart-the-transition-to-electric-transportation-and-modernize-infrastructure>.

duty vehicles, like school and transit buses and garbage trucks.¹⁶ EPA is currently working to develop the new Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles and Clean Ports Programs in the *Inflation Reduction Act*, and I also encourage your members to seek funding through those programs once available.¹⁷

Massachusetts communities are already benefiting from millions of dollars of federal investments to help them buy clean school buses, and I believe they will also be competitive for the newly announced funds. The benefits of electrifying our school bus fleet are extraordinary. Replacing a single diesel bus with an electric one can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 54,000 pounds each year, as good as replacing nearly six passenger vehicles.¹⁸ Electrification eliminates the health risk from air pollution to drivers, children riding the bus, and the communities through which they pass. And “not having a noisy engine and dirty air can lead to calmer kids and a safer ride.”¹⁹ Additionally, there is the possibility that electric school buses could serve a dual purpose – when not being used to transport students, electric school buses “can be used as mini, mobile sources of power via their battery storage,” helping store energy and balance the load for the grid as more renewables are added, making the grid “more reliable and resilient.”²⁰ If half of the school buses in the U.S. went electric and used vehicle-to-grid (V2G) batteries, they “could store enough energy to power...15 million school laptops—enough for nearly every high school student in the U.S.—for a month.”²¹ Electric school buses also “have fewer moving parts, so are easier and cheaper to maintain,”²² and can have much lower fuel costs throughout their lifetime²³ – and the money saved can instead be invested by school districts in our children’s education.

Electric school buses are an important investment in our children’s future, and a “power-*full* win for school districts, electric utilities, and the planet.”²⁴ I highly encourage you and your members to make the most of the opportunities provided through the EPA Clean School Bus

¹⁶ EPA, “Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicle Program,” <https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/clean-heavy-duty-vehicle-program>.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Earth911, “Why It’s Time for Electric School Buses,” Gemma Alexander, February 16, 2022, <https://earth911.com/eco-tech/why-its-time-for-electric-school-buses>; EPA, “Greenhouse Gases Equivalencies Calculator - Calculations and References,” <https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gases-equivalencies-calculator-calculations-and-references>.

¹⁹ International Journal of Sustainable Built Environment, “Vulnerability of bus and truck drivers affected from vehicle engine noise,” Naba Kumar Mondal, Madhumita Dey, and Jayanta Kumar Datta, December 2014, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212609014000508>; Transport Policy, “Beyond emissions and economics: Rethinking the co-benefits of electric vehicles (EVs) and vehicle-to-grid (V2G),” Lance Noel et al., November 2018, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967070X17306479>.

²⁰ EPA, “What If Electric School Buses Could be Used to Supply Power When Off Duty?,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/what-if-electric-school-buses-could-be-used-supply-power-when-duty>.

²¹ *Id.*

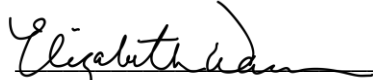
²² *Id.*

²³ School Bus Fleet, “Electric School Buses Take to the Road: Real-World Results,” Nicole Schlosser, May 15, 2018, <https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/10009621/electric-school-buses-take-to-the-road-real-world-results>.

²⁴ EPA, “What If Electric School Buses Could be Used to Supply Power When Off Duty?,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/what-if-electric-school-buses-could-be-used-supply-power-when-duty>.

Program, and look forward to working with you to bring this funding home to communities across Massachusetts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Warren", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator