



*The Office of Erin J. Murphy
Boston City Councilor At-Large*

July 17, 2026

Chair Katherine Craven
Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
135 Santilli Highway
Everett, MA 02149

Dear Chair Craven:

I am writing to request an opportunity to return before the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to discuss the continuing safety, reliability, and oversight failures within Boston Public Schools transportation.

For years, I have raised these concerns through City Council hearing orders, public hearings, direct outreach to DESE and BPS leadership, requests for information, and repeated efforts to work collaboratively with the district.

Despite those efforts, families continue to receive the same explanations and assurances while the same fundamental problems remain.

Boston spends nearly \$200 million each year on school transportation. Yet students and families continue to experience late buses, missed trips, poor communication, and unreliable service. These failures disproportionately affect students with disabilities and families who depend upon specialized transportation.

BPS has now begun fining Transdev for significantly late and missed buses. While I support the use of all available contractual penalties, the need for these fines confirms that the district and its contractor are still failing to meet basic expectations.

I am also deeply concerned that Transdev was the only company to submit a formal bid for the current BPS bus management contract. This has left Boston heavily dependent upon one contractor despite years of performance and safety concerns.

The issues now extend far beyond buses arriving late.

Following the tragic death of five-year-old BPS student Lens Joseph, an independent investigation identified serious failures involving driver certification, training records, employee files, contractor recordkeeping, and BPS oversight.

The recent WBUR and ProPublica investigation raised even more alarming concerns. It found that dozens of fatal crashes involving Transdev-operated buses were missing from, or were not properly attributed to Transdev in, the federal safety database. This included the collision that killed Lens Joseph.

The reporting also identified at least 71 serious Boston school bus crashes involving Transdev that did not appear under the company's name in the federal system.

A company entrusted with transporting children should know its complete safety history, maintain accurate

records, disclose serious incidents, and ensure that regulators, contracting agencies, elected officials, and the public have a truthful picture of its safety performance.

These findings raise urgent questions about what BPS knew, what Transdev disclosed, and what independent review the district conducted before awarding and managing this contract.

I am deeply concerned that BPS either lacked critical safety information, failed to examine it adequately, or has not been fully forthcoming with elected officials and the public about the scope of the problem.

When a school district spends nearly \$200 million annually on transportation and relies upon a contractor that was the sole bidder, the public has a right to expect exceptional oversight, complete transparency, and immediate accountability.

I have tried to work with BPS. I have asked questions, requested information, participated in hearings, and repeatedly called for corrective action. After years of outreach, I no longer believe that local assurances alone are sufficient.

I am asking DESE and the Board for support, independent oversight, and clear expectations before the beginning of the 2026–2027 school year.

Specifically, I respectfully request:

- An opportunity to return before the Board and present the history of these concerns.
- An independent review of BPS transportation safety, driver certification, contractor oversight, crash reporting, and special education transportation.
- Verification that all recommendations following the death of Lens Joseph have been fully implemented.
- A written readiness and corrective-action plan before the first day of school, including measurable standards, clear deadlines, and consequences for noncompliance.
- An explanation of how BPS and DESE will independently verify Transdev's complete crash and safety history and prepare for continued performance failures by a sole-bid contractor.

I have exhausted repeated efforts to obtain sufficient answers and meaningful change through BPS alone. I am returning to the Board because Boston students and families need state support and independent accountability.

We should not begin another school year with the same promises and uncertainty.

Parents deserve to know that every driver is qualified, every incident is disclosed, every safety concern is investigated, and every contractor is held accountable.

Please let me know the earliest opportunity for me to appear before the Board before the beginning of the 2026–2027 school year.

Sincerely,



Erin J. Murphy
Boston City Councilor At-Large

cc: Pedro Martinez, Commissioner, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Members of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Superintendent Mary Skipper
Boston School Committee