



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING**  
**1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004**

November 2, 2022

Chancellor Lewis Ferebee  
District of Columbia Public Schools  
1200 First Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chancellor Ferebee:

The safety and well-being of DCPS students is among the highest priorities for the DC Government. We were incredibly disturbed to learn of the October 27, 2022 incident in which a bus driver with a blood alcohol level of 0.20 – far above the legal limit of 0.08 – drove a chartered bus of Murch Elementary School students off the road, damaging the vehicle and injuring nine children and one staffer. The driver reportedly only pulled over at the insistence of other adults onboard.

The Fairfax County Police Department found that this driver's license had been revoked in Virginia after he received a prior driving while intoxicated charge, and his Maryland license was suspended at the time of this incident. Two other drivers employed by the company contracted for transportation services for this trip, Rome Charters, LLC, did not have the valid licenses required to operate a bus. Police cited a total of 18 safety violations among the three buses dispatched for this trip.

The companies that DCPS contracts with bear great responsibility for ensuring the safety of DCPS students when students are in their care. DCPS, too, has the significant responsibility of thoroughly vetting contractors with whom it entrusts the safety and care of students. In both regards, this incident reveals quality control failures that could easily have led to a much more tragic outcome.

In response to this event, you issued a statement that DCPS would do a thorough review of transportation vendors, and would discontinue using Rome Charters. To simply discontinue, in our opinion, is not enough. Pursuant to D.C. Code § 2-359.07, the District of Columbia may debar or suspend contractors from consideration for award of contracts or subcontracts for a variety of reasons, for a period of time. We understand that DCPS has independent contracting and procurement authority, but we ask that DCPS formally request of the District's Chief Procurement Officer that Rome Charters be added to the District's Excluded Parties List to ensure that another DC government agency does not unknowingly contract with this company and face a similar problem. We acknowledge the difficulty that many firms across the country are having right now with recruiting drivers with commercial drivers' licenses, but that is no excuse to continue to contract with companies with problematic performance records. Across District government, we have seen issues with agencies not properly documenting detailed contract performance reviews, which as you know, plays a significant role in the process for extending or awarding subsequent contracts in the future. We believe the severity of this incident rises to the level of DCPS taking this formal step.

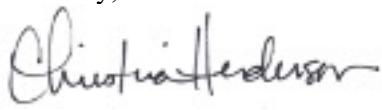
Finally, we also request answers to the following questions:

1. How long are vendors eligible to stay on the approved DCPS vendor list before needing to resubmit documentation?
2. Does DCPS require its vendors to ensure that employees who may interact with students or educators pass a background screening?
  - a. If so, what are the minimum requirements required for clearance?

- b. Does DCPS verify the contractor's representations of its employees' clearance independently?
3. With regard to transportation vendors in particular, does DCPS request license verification from vendors for the specific employees that are assigned to work a particular event prior to signing off on the request from a school?
4. It is our understanding that DMV is able to access the driving records, at least for certain infractions, for drivers licensed in Maryland and Virginia; this includes records of impaired driving. Has DCPS explored partnering with DMV to directly access and review these records for Maryland, Virginia, and District resident employees of transportation vendors to confirm the driver meets DCPS qualifications?

We ask that you please provide responses to these questions by Wednesday, November 9, 2022. Should you or your staff have any questions, please contact Gabrielle Rogoff at [grogoff@dccouncil.gov](mailto:grogoff@dccouncil.gov).

Sincerely,



Christina Henderson  
Councilmember, At-Large



Mary M. Cheh  
Councilmember, Ward 3

CC:

Chairman Phil Mendelson  
George Schutter, Chief Procurement Officer