

Testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee

Ray Alvarez School Bus Driver

March 15<sup>th</sup> 2019

Mrs. Chairwoman and members of the committee,

My name is Ray Alvarez, I've been driving a school bus on and off since 2007. I started driving to offset my loss of income from the mortgage melt down.

When I completed my training and earned my Class B CDL with SP endorsements, the trainer knew that I was a Correctional Officer in the Army and asked if I would like to drive a Special Needs Bus. I said yes because they had A/C. Suffice to say I found out it takes a very unique & dedicated person for this work.

FS bought out Laidlaw 90 days into my first school year and in 2008, at the request of the drivers, the Teamsters helped us form a Union. We felt we needed representation since wages were frozen.

Wages have steadily increased as a result of Teamster representation, but no UI over summer break and other times throughout the year, dramatically increases turnover throughout the state. I've heard as high as 25 to 35 % over summer.

To offset this problem, most of the SB companies in JOCO have been offering sign on bonuses from \$3,000 up to \$5,000. Coupled with employee referral awards \$250 to \$1,000. Compounded with recruiting and training costs ranging from \$3,000 to as high as \$5,000. Although this isn't an official "Cost /Benefits analysis, simple math would suggest the low end \$6250 to \$11000 to replace drivers . My conclusion would be a little UI would be considerably less.

Turnover does affect the children in similar ways as substitute teachers. From my personal experience, many of my students spend more time on the bus with me than any one teacher during their school day.

As a Veteran, I'm proud to say we did a recent survey and found that over 30% of our workers were either Veterans or someone in their household is. Furthermore I can say from working on the Recruiting Team at different locations that the industry actively seeks Veterans because of their dependability and dedication.

In closing I would like to say that it's time for School Bus Drivers to be treated as skilled professionals and eligible to apply for and receive UI like any other professions and trades.

Thank you