CORY A. BOOKER
NEW JERSEY

SUITE SH–717
HART BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–3007
(202) 224–3224

United States Senate

January 17, 2024

Dear School Administrator,

I want to be sure you saw the good news: $500 million is now available through the EPA Clean School Bus (CSB) Program 2023 Rebates. I am writing to inform you and your school district about the program, and encourage you to consider taking advantage of this opportunity to replace older diesel school buses with cleaner alternatives. The CSB Rebates Program is currently soliciting applications nationwide, with a **deadline of January 31, 2024,** and is prioritizing high-need school districts and rural school districts. Large Title I funded school districts may also be prioritized. The EPA will award up to $345,000 for priority school districts and $200,000 for non-priority school districts, with flexibility on how much is used for bus or charging infrastructure.[1] Any public school district; the state or local governments that provide a school district with buses; and eligible third-party contractors can apply for this funding, and I encourage you to consider submitting an application for this funding opportunity.[2] Funding can be used toward bus purchases, charging infrastructure, and workforce training.

Between the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (*IIJA*) and the *Inflation Reduction Act* (*IRA*), there is "once-in-a-generation funding to electrify school buses across the nation."[3] Since the passing of the IIJA in 2021, Federal funding to replace already existing, diesel-powered school buses has doubled. The Law created the $5-billion, 5-year EPA Clean School Bus Program (CSBP) to replace aging diesel school buses with cleaner alternatives via up-front grants and rebates.[4] So far, EPA under the Biden-Harris administration has awarded over $1.8 billion to 652 school districts to fund electric and low-emission school buses across school districts.[5] In October 2022, the Administration announced the first recipients of EPA's Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, the first round of funding from the CSB Program. EPA awarded nearly $1 billion to 389 school districts to fund electric and low-emission school buses across school districts, including $790,000 for New Jersey.[6] And the EPA recently announced the results of the

[1] Electric School Bus Initiative, "How to Apply for Clean School Bus Program Funding," October 18, 2023, https://electricschoolbusinitiative.org/how-apply-clean-school-bus-program-funding.
[2] EPA, "Clean School Bus Program Rebates," https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-rebates.
[3] Business Wire, "Joint Effort by Exelon and Transportation Electrification Advocates Shows the Electric School Bus Transition Will Provide Wide-Ranging Health, Environmental and Societal Benefits," December 19, 2023, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231219395821/en/Joint-Effort-by-Exelon-and-Transportation-Electrification-Advocates-Shows-the-Electric-School-Bus-Transition-Will-Provide-Wide-Ranging-Health-Environmental-and-Societal-Benefits.
[4] EPA, "Clean School Bus Program Awards," https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-awards.
[5] *Id*.
[6] 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-administrationannounces-nearly-1-billion-epas-clean-school-bus-program; EPA, "Biden-Harris

next round of CSB funding through the 2023 grant competition, awarding nearly $19 million in grants to help five school districts in New Jersey purchase a total of 42 electric buses.[7]

There are many benefits to transitioning from diesel to an electric fleet, including lower maintenance costs, fuel-costs, and emissions that impact our communities. A recent report found that "School bus electrification represents an unprecedented opportunity for environmental, public health, economic, and grid flexibility gains to address longstanding social equity issues and significantly improve and transform the quality of life for all people" with "a wide range of…benefits to customers, communities and the electric grid."[8] Approximately 25 million children in the U.S. rely on school buses to get to and from school.[9] Most of our nation's school bus fleets—nearly 95% of buses—still operate on diesel fuel, emitting harmful air pollutants that impact the learning, development, and health of our children—causing asthma and other respiratory diseases, heart disease, and cancer, and lowering children's academic achievement via English and math scores.[10] Lower-income students are 33% more likely to ride the bus daily than students in other income brackets, and Black students and students with disabilities are also more likely to rely on diesel school buses.[11] Lower-income and communities of color are disproportionately exposed to the risk of diesel buses, and the emissions impact these communities both directly through lower air quality, and also contribute to the climate crisis that also disproportionately affects those same lower-income and communities of color.[12]

Administration Announces New Jersey School Districts Will Get $2,500,000 from EPA's Clean School Bus Program," press release, October 26, 2022, https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-new-jersey-school-districts-will-get-2500000; EPA, "Clean School Bus Program Awards," https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-awards.

[7] EPA, "Clean School Bus Program Awards," https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-awards; EPA, "Biden-Harris Administration announces nearly $19 million in awards for clean school buses across New Jersey as part of Investing in America Agenda," press release, January 8, 2024, https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-19-million-awards-clean-school-buses.

[8] CALSTART, "The Electric School Bus Transition: Accelerating Equitable Deployments through Understanding Grid Impacts and Policy Solutions," https://calstart.org/electric-school-bus-transition/; Business Wire, "Joint Effort by Exelon and Transportation Electrification Advocates Shows the Electric School Bus Transition Will Provide Wide-Ranging Health, Environmental and Societal Benefits," December 19, 2023, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231219395821/en/Joint-Effort-by-Exelon-and-Transportation-Electrification-Advocates-Shows-the-Electric-School-Bus-Transition-Will-Provide-Wide-Ranging-Health-Environmental-and-Societal-Benefits.

[9] *Id*.

[10] *Id*; 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.

[11] Business Wire, "Joint Effort by Exelon and Transportation Electrification Advocates Shows the Electric School Bus Transition Will Provide Wide-Ranging Health, Environmental and Societal Benefits," December 19, 2023, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231219395821/en/Joint-Effort-by-Exelon-and-Transportation-Electrification-Advocates-Shows-the-Electric-School-Bus-Transition-Will-Provide-Wide-Ranging-Health-Environmental-and-Societal-Benefits.

[12] 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.

The benefits of electrifying our school bus fleet are multifold. Zero emission vehicles create a cleaner environment and healthier air in school zones and neighborhoods, reducing exposure of children, drivers, community members to harmful pollutants, and easing conditions for children with asthma and pre-existing respiratory issues. And "not having a noisy engine and dirty air can lead to calmer kids and a safer ride."[13] Electric school buses have lower maintenance costs due to fewer moving parts and therefore less wear and tear on vehicle brakes, and also have lower fuel costs compared to their diesel counterparts.[14] This all adds up to lower lifetime vehicle costs, putting money back in school districts' pockets that can then be reinvested in our children's education. Additionally, when not in use electric school buses could serve a dual purpose as mobile battery storage units, helping balance the grid and increase grid reliability and resiliency particularly as more renewables are added to our energy mix.[15] If half of all school buses in the country 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."[16] And 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.[17] Replacing all of the nation's diesel school buses with electric school buses "would avoid approximately nine million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year, the equivalent of removing two million cars from the road."[18]

In addition to funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the *Inflation Reduction Act*, passed in August 2022, includes a further $1 billion for clean heavy duty vehicles such as school buses.[19] EPA is currently developing this new Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicle program to allocate that funding, and I also encourage you to apply through those

---

[13] 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.

[14] 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; 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.

[15] *Id.*

[16] *Id.*

[17] 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-calculatorcalculations-and-references.

[18] Business Wire, "Joint Effort by Exelon and Transportation Electrification Advocates Shows the Electric School Bus Transition Will Provide Wide-Ranging Health, Environmental and Societal Benefits," December 19, 2023, https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20231219395821/en/Joint-Effort-by-Exelon-and-Transportation-Electrification-Advocates-Shows-the-Electric-School-Bus-Transition-Will-Provide-Wide-Ranging-Health-Environmental-and-Societal-Benefits.

[19] EPA, "Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicle Program," https://www.epa.gov/inflation-reduction-act/clean-heavy-duty-vehicle-program.

programs once available.[20] The IRA also "creates a unique opportunity for K-12 school districts to leverage federal tax credits to help to fund investments in clean energy infrastructure and reduce cost," including through the purchase of electric school buses and the installation of charging equipment, and I also hope you will consider those opportunities to help transition your school bus fleet.[21]

Our office would be glad to be a resource for you as you consider this funding opportunity. We are committed to helping school districts offer a clean ride to and from school for students, and to bringing federal funding into New Jersey. Please contact my office at (973) 639-8700 with questions you have or to discuss your application. If and when you choose to apply for this funding, my office may be able to assist you in obtaining a Support Letter for your application.

Sincerely,

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

[20] *Id.*
[21] Department of the Treasury, "FACT SHEET: Inflation Reduction Act Tax Credits Can Fund School Facilities Upgrades and Reduce School District Energy Bills," January 4, 2024, https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2016.