Month XX, 2023

**Minister of Education**

Executive Branch
228 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB, T5K 2B6

**E-mail:** education.minister@gov.ab.ca

*Delivered by email*

**Re: Transportation Funding**

Dear Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides,

I am writing to you today to request you revisit the transportation grants currently allocated to Foothills School Division (FSD).

As you are aware, Foothills School Division is continuing to face significant transportation challenges. Like other school divisions across the province, FSD is struggling to find bus drivers to service all routes and provide spare-driver coverage, to cope with increased inflation (fuel, parts, labour) pressures, and to purchase new buses to replace decommissioned vehicles. Most significantly, however, is the impact on FSD as it prepares to meet the mandated change to the walking distance from Alberta Education.

With the reduced walk limit from 2.4km to 1km (grades 1 – 6) and 2km (grades 7-12) for students taking effect in the 2024-2025 school year, FSD will need to purchase at least 16 more school buses to service schools and families in Okotoks and High River, costing approximately $2.7 Million. As Foothills School Division’s capital reserves currently sit at $2.5 Million, there is simply not enough money in their reserves to cover this mandated cost.

An additional challenge to this legislated obligation is that while it supports rural schools, it congests and disadvantages our urban schools – and from a divisional perspective, puts significant strain on our transportation system. I have learned that FSD has applied to borrow money to purchase the new buses, but this money will come at a cost to the division’s funding over the next ten years. It is shocking that dollars meant for classrooms will be ‘borrowed’ to pay for the buses. I urge you to reconsider the reduced walking limit and ask that you either revisit it from an urban and a rural perspective, or that you simply fund outright the buses that this mandate has required school boards to purchase.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for my child and our school division. I appreciate being able to voice my concerns about how a government mandate around transportation will significantly impact my child’s classroom.

Respectfully,

Insert Name