

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
80 MAIDEN LANE, 20TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (212) 510-1400
Fax: (212) 510-1550
WWW.NYCSCI.ORG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2019

CONTACT: Regina Gluzmanova
(212) 510-1479

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
ABOARD DANGEROUSLY HOT SCHOOL BUSES

Today, Special Commissioner of Investigation Anastasia Coleman released a report detailing the findings of her office's ("SCI") investigation into New York City Department of Education ("DOE") school bus vendors who operated buses at dangerously warm temperatures during the hot summer months, and the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation ("OPT")'s response, including its inspection and violation process.

The investigation, which began in July 2019, and stemmed from a complaint and press reports, concluded that DOE bus vendors had little accountability when buses operated with defective air conditioning units. One school in Queens – the Lifeline Center for Child Development – reported that during a July heat wave, special needs students, many of whom required psychotropic medications, were transported aboard buses with interior air temperatures soaring above 100 degrees for several hours to and from school.

DOE's contracts require school bus vendors provide reasonable ambient air temperature on buses used in student transportation. Although bus vendors self-reported their repairs, and OPT inspectors conducted inspections to ensure that vendors adhered to contractual guidelines, there was no uniform system in place to track temperature or bus equipment complaints. In many instances, complaints did not result in OPT citations to the vendors, monetary fines, or other penalties.

Special Commissioner Coleman emphasized, "SCI's review of the present system demonstrates many areas in need of critical improvement, with the ultimate goal of ensuring reliably safe transport for the City's most vulnerable student population."