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Dept. of Education Addresses Parent Concerns and Clarifies Transportation Issue for Special Education Students

Dept. of Education clarifies a misunderstanding about a missed transportation issue for a Special Education student and emphasizes the importance of transparent communication, following concerns raised during a Senate hearing

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The V.I. Dept. of Education convened a meeting on Tuesday to address concerns raised during a Senate Committee on Education and Workforce Development hearing. The meeting was organized to clarify a misunderstanding regarding the transportation of a Special Education (SPED) student, following an inquiry made at the hearing on September 9.

Present at the meeting were former Senator Nelly O'Reilly, concerned parents, SPED Bus Supervisor Ms. Peters, Special Education District Director Dr. Tanya Lockhart, and Deputy Superintendent Andrea Shillingford. The matter in question involved a parent's belief that their child had not been picked up due to a reported fuel shortage for SPED buses. However, upon investigation, it was confirmed that the situation arose from a missed communication rather than a fuel issue.

SPED Bus Supervisor Ms. Peters explained that multiple attempts had been made to contact the parent after the student was absent due to illness. The calls, however, were missed by the parent, leading to the misunderstanding, according to Education officials.

Ms. Shillingford emphasized the importance of fact-checking and transparent communication to avoid similar issues in the future. "We are grateful for the parent's commitment to their child's well-being and for former Senator O'Reilly's ongoing support of our community. Their advocacy ensures that we continuously strive to improve our services," she stated.

Shillingford also commended Ms. Peters for her dedication, adding, "Ms. Peters' commitment to ensuring our students' safe transportation is exemplary. Her efforts to maintain clear lines of communication with parents, even in challenging situations, are vital to our department's success."

During the meeting, VIDE reiterated its standard procedures for special education transportation. SPED students receive door-to-door services unless otherwise agreed upon by the child's education team. In cases of absence, the SPED Bus Supervisor contacts parents the following day to verify attendance and arrange transportation.

Parents are encouraged to regularly check voicemails and return missed calls to ensure timely coordination. Additionally, notifying the school or SPED Bus Supervisor of planned absences is essential for efficient route planning.