



Oct. 16, 2017

Dear Superintendent Nyland, Seattle School Board Directors, and First Student executives:

As a Seattle City Councilmember representing thousands of children, working parents, and educators, I am appalled that First Student and the Seattle School District have to date failed to provide quality, affordable healthcare to the 400 school bus drivers who daily transport thousands of kids to and from our public schools.

I fully support the members of Teamsters 174 who, after months of fruitless negotiations, voted to authorize a strike. The drivers are responsible for the care and safety of our children to no lesser degree than the educators and other school district employees. All workers in the public school system - including drivers - deserve quality healthcare and retirement benefits.

It is mind-boggling to me, and doubtless to almost everyone in the community, that you have let matters get to this point. Responsibility for the strike, should it happen, will fall directly in your laps.

To Superintendent Nyland and the School Board members: The reason you are in this situation is because of your ill-conceived decision to contract out school bus service to a low-bidder, private, for-profit company headquartered thousands of miles away, whose ultimate responsibility is to maximize profits for its executives and major shareholders. Contracting out does not provide you with any moral insulation in this situation. You have a responsibility to step up and solve the immediate problem, and then make plans to bring bus service back in-house, as other schools districts do, as quickly as possible.

To First Student executives: Your refusal to pay for affordable benefits to the drivers who make your company run and generate profits for you is outrageous. You are the largest school bus company in North America, and a division of FirstGroup plc, a global corporation with \$7.5 billion in revenue last year and \$449 million in profits.¹ You boast in your marketing materials of

“highly-trained drivers” who provide “the industry’s strongest safety record,”² yet you refuse to provide these same drivers basic dignity and respect.

What the Seattle School District and First Student are doing is irresponsible to tens of thousands of students and families, and the entire community. It is far past time for you to fix the problem by providing the Teamsters bus drivers with quality, affordable healthcare and retirement benefits.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Kshama Sawant

Cc: First Student CEO Dennis Maple
First Student Area General Manager Bill Noftz
Seattle Superintendent Larry Nyland
Seattle School Board Directors
Seattle School District senior staff

¹ <http://www.firstgroupplc.com/~media/Files/F/Firstgroup-Plc/indexed-pdfs/2017%20ARA/2017%20FirstGroup%20plc%20Annual%20Report%20and%20Accounts.pdf>. Page 2. Currency conversion at 1.33 British Pound Sterling = 1 US Dollar.

² <http://www.firststudentinc.com/why-first-student>