



**NEWS FROM**

# **Teamsters Local 251**

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## **STRIKE VOTE TAKEN BY STA/OCEAN STATE TRANSIT SCHOOL BUS WORKERS**

(EAST PROVIDENCE; BARRINGTON, R.I.) – Last night the 200 school bus drivers, monitors, and aides who carry the most precious cargo for East Providence and Barrington schools authorized representatives at Teamsters Local 251 to call a strike at any time. Negotiations for the drivers have been ongoing since May of 2019; The monitors and aides voted to join the Teamsters last month.

“Nobody likes to hear the word strike,” said Matt Taibi, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 251. “We take the responsibility of a potential strike very seriously. We know that parents, students, schools, workers, and STA/Ocean State Transit will be inconvenienced in the event of a strike. A strike is something that we don’t want to undertake, but under the circumstances it is a very good possibility. It is a last resort.”

STA/Ocean State Transit is owned by the New Jersey based Student Transportation of America (STA), the second largest student transportation company in the country.

“Ocean State Transit is not a ‘Mom and Pop’ operation,” said Nick Williams, Business Agent for Teamsters Local 251. “This huge company has regularly shorted employee pay. There are multiple unfair labor practice violations, both settled and pending. There is an investigation of potential violation of Rhode Island’s paid sick leave law. There have been multiple fire code, occupational safety and environmental compliance complaints as well. It’s no wonder with this type of management that workers sought protection by joining our union.”

“We believe STA/Ocean State management has not been negotiating in good faith,” said Taibi. “They continue to commit unfair labor practices and try to intimidate their workers.”

“As to negotiations, the union has made significant movement with our proposals, but even with the assistance of a federal mediator, the company has made only insignificant

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movement,” noted Taibi. “If the company wants to avoid a strike, they need to stop breaking federal labor law and act now.”

The bus drivers, monitors and aides plan to take their case to the East Providence School Committee meeting tonight at 6:30 pm.

“We will take the opportunity tonight to inform and educate the community as well as the East Providence School Committee about the issues the workers are facing and the likelihood of a strike,” said Taibi.

“The company gets paid very well with taxpayer dollars, but we get paid substandard wages. The company pays nothing towards health, vision dental or retirement benefits, but that’s not enough for this management team,” said Brittany Smith, who works for Ocean State Transit. “They continue their disrespectful behavior towards us, have taken away paid time off and want us to work off the clock, we have had ENOUGH!”

“We urge parents to plan alternative transportation in the event of a strike and for school committee members to tell STA/Ocean State Transit to negotiate a fair contract for all NOW!” said Taibi.

Teamsters Local 251 represents workers in a wide variety of industries throughout Rhode Island. For more information, go to <https://teamsterslocal251.org/>