



NEWS RELEASE

MAYOR OUTLINES SERIES OF ACTION STEPS IN RESPONSE TO REVIEW OF DECEMBER 13TH STORM

PROVIDENCE – “The ultimate responsibility for the safe transportation of our children in the public schools rests with me,” said Mayor David N. Cicilline today as he outlined a series of action steps he is taking in response to the December 13th storm that left school children stranded on gridlocked buses late into the evening. The Mayor said the results of a week-long review conducted by Chief of Administration John Simmons and Police Chief Dean M. Esserman clearly point to a major breakdown in communications and overall systemic failures.

“By mid-afternoon it should have been clear that a serious problem with school bus delays was brewing and no red flags were raised,” said Mayor Cicilline. “I expect those with primary responsibility for the transportation of children in our district to be fully engaged in monitoring and supervising the process until the last child is home and to act quickly and seek assistance when problems arise.”

Mayor Cicilline outlined five action steps to prevent a similar situation from occurring in the future:

- The City has modified its Emergency Operations Plan to require the Emergency Operations Cabinet to be automatically activated whenever school children are being transported during extreme weather with dangerous driving conditions.
- First Student Transportation has agreed to establish a communication system that will improve the ability of bus drivers or bus monitors to communicate directly with the bus yard in order to report any difficulties in transportation students.
- Mayor has directed the School Superintendent to establish a communication procedure that requires parents to be notified every hour by an automated phone call system when there are substantial delays on school buses.
- Mayor has directed the School Superintendent to establish, immediately, a dedicated hotline to answer parents’ questions regarding their children’s transportation. The hotline will be staffed with sufficient personnel during emergencies so that parents will not be kept on hold for unreasonable periods of time.

- Mayor has directed the School Superintendent to reverse the current transportation schedules in weather emergencies to ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable children are transported first.

In addition, citing failure in judgment, communication and leadership from those with operational responsibility in the School Department and the City's Emergency Management Agency, the Mayor suspended the Chief of Operations for Providence Schools, Tomas Hannah without pay for 30 days and removed Leo Messier as director of EMA. Providence Police Major Monty Montiero has been named acting director of EMA.

Mayor Cicilline thanked the bus drivers, bus monitors, teachers and principals for "going beyond the call of duty" and taking extraordinary care of the children during the storm. He also hailed the men and women of the Providence Police and Fire Department as "heroes of that stormy night."

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