

**Panel Recommendation to the Chancellor authorizing the Department of Education to create a “Safety Hazard Advisory Review Program (S.H.A.R.P.) committee to review hazard variance applications. – Dated February 9, 2012**

**Whereas**, a joint NYC independent Budget Office and NYC Board of Education report stated “The proportion of general education pupils in public and private schools who currently ride yellow buses varies considerably across boroughs”; and

**Whereas**, the Department of Education (DOE) eliminated certain school bus variances in September 2010 which disproportionately affected students in specific areas within the New York City, particularly in Queens and Staten Island; and

**Whereas**, the DOE Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) stated at that time that individual variance applications would be reviewed and granted where appropriate; and

**Whereas**, according to DOE hazard variance application and approval data covering the period from January 2010 through September 2011, 1,130 applications were submitted (881 by public schools and 249 by private schools) but only 177 were approved citywide (108 or 12% for public schools and 69 or 28% for private schools) ; and

**Whereas**, 1,028 of the variance applications submitted during this time period (468 or 42% from schools in Queens) and (560 or 50% from schools in Staten Island) – the 2 boroughs acknowledged to have the greatest need for yellow bus service in the IBO/BOE report; and

**Whereas**, Queens submitted 468 applications with only 42 approved (18 or 5% for public schools and 24 or 34% for private schools) while Staten Island submitted 560 hazard variance applications and only 123 were approved (82 or 20% for public schools and 41 or 27% for private schools);

**Therefore be it RESOLVED**, that the Panel for Educational Policy, within its power under State Education law, recommends that the Chancellor authorize the DOE’s Office of Pupil Transportation to implement the following Safety Hazard Advisory Review Program (S.H.A.R.P.) committee to establish a standard operating procedure for reviewing hazard variance applications, while providing transparency to the variance process:

- Establish school district advisory committees by June 2012, based on a Community Education Council written request whose primary function will be to establish clear and concise criteria for granting hazard variances.
- The criteria for granting hazard variance could be modeled after a NYS Education Law 3635 (b) which establishes Child Safety Zones:
  - A list comprised of identifiable road hazards would be established.
  - Each road hazard will be assigned a point value.
  - Lack of adequate public transportation will also be allotted points.
  - In order to grant a pupil transportation hazard variance, a clearly defined total score must be achieved.
  - Each grade level will require a specific number of points to meet the eligibility requirements for a hazard variance.
- Each school district wanting to create a S.H.A.R.P. committee would be comprised of nine (9) representatives; (3) Community Education Council members, (1) District Community Superintendent, (3) DOE representatives from the Office of Pupil Transportation, (1) Rep from the office of Family and Community Engagement and (1) respective Borough President designee.
- Each S.H.A.R.P. committee will meet as needed and collectively analyze the conditions and grant hazard variances by majority consensus.
- DOE, CEC’s and individual schools will advertise the hazard variance application process in June of the preceding school year.