



**TEAMSTERS
LOCAL 959
STATE OF ALASKA**

Affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters

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DURHAM FUMBLES DEAL, STRIKE CONTINUES INTO FINAL WEEKS OF SCHOOL YEAR

Thursday, April 16, 2026: Teamsters Local 959 came the closest yet to an agreement with Durham School Services at the bargaining table during negotiations last week (4/9/26 – 4/10/26), amid a six-week strike. Durham's negotiation team made some changes to definitions and how they would implement their HireRight policy, which torpedoed the deal, setting the progress made back significantly. Instead of continuing with the agreed-upon language, Durham has proposed changes to this language that will cause significant and lasting harm to school bus drivers. This also represents the second time in as many weeks that Teamsters Local 959 and Durham have come very close to an agreement, only to watch it fall apart due to Durham's last-minute changes or simply walking back mutually understood proposals

Negotiations continued into week seven of the strike (4/14/26 – 4/16/26) with very little progress made, HireRight being the biggest hurdle for both parties. Meeting virtually, Durham was unable to dedicate more time than Tuesday (4/14), only three hours on Wednesday (4/15), and nearly no face-to-face time today (4/16) before their other obligations took priority over coming to an agreement. Currently, Durham has not committed to any further negotiation dates.

Why is the HireRight issue so important? Alaska school bus drivers have a Department of Transportation (DOT) Medical Card. DOT Medical cards are issued by DOT Certified Medical Examiners who are trained and licensed by the Federal Department of Transportation. Once a driver has a DOT Medical card, they are safe and legal to drive commercially for any school bus company in Alaska, according to state and federal law.

Management at Durham School Services is subjecting its employees to medical testing over and above the DOT Medical Card as a condition of employment. The cost of Durham's required medical visits, testing, and screening (all such Company mandates are above state and federal requirements) is being placed squarely on the employee. The company offers no reimbursement or financial help with any additional medical requirements that go beyond what is required by state and federal laws. For a school bus driver who may only make \$30,000 a year, unnecessary medical screening could take a significant portion of their annual earnings if they are forced to pay out of pocket. School bus drivers have serious concerns about agreeing to new contract language that may ultimately cause them to lose their jobs. Competent, qualified school bus drivers should not lose their jobs because they cannot afford to pay for unnecessary company mandates. School bus workers have not opposed additional medical screening, but contest the cost being 100% out of



pocket. Ultimately, this will lead to experienced and qualified school bus workers leaving our community to drive elsewhere.

Teamsters Local 959 is also attempting to get the safety language outlined in the Mat-Su School District handbook to be aligned in the collective bargaining agreement to enforce safer busing regulations, maintain a minimum number of buses that is required by the district, and provide more thorough training.

This includes, but is not limited to, requiring a minimum number of backup buses that are road-ready to be deployed when buses fail safety inspections, having enough time in the mornings to perform proper and thorough pre-trip inspections while also being on time for student pick-ups, and to make sure the school bus workers are properly trained to put tire chains on when weather conditions call for it.

Teamsters Local 959 greatly appreciates the patience of the Mat-Su Valley families while we work through this dispute with Durham School Services. We understand and share in the frustration of the community, but we assure you that this agreement will lead to safer, more efficient busing for the community going forward.

For any questions or press inquiries, contact Local 959's Political Coordinator, Patrick FitzGerald, at (907) 230-8809.